

August 23-September 5, 1987

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GayCommunityNews

VOL. 15, NO. 7

THE WEEKLY FOR LESBIANS AND GAY MALES

BIPAD: 65498

SPEAKING OUT/ REACHING IN

A special supplement
for and from lesbians
in prison and their
friends outside,
defying these cages,
breaking down these
walls

IGNORANCE
ETY

V.V.C.



GayCommunityNews

Vol. 15, No. 7

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Aug. 23-Sept. 5, 1987

Mayoral race figures in Missouri homeporting decision

SF Supervisors Sell Out Queers to Navy

By Chris Bull

SAN FRANCISCO — The Board of Supervisors moved one step closer to allowing the homeporting of the U.S. Navy's nuclear battleship, *The Missouri*, angering the lesbian and gay community and complicating this city's race for mayor. Critics claim the Board of Supervisors has sold out protections for gay men and lesbians by passing an agreement with the Navy which will not insure enforcement of the city's anti-discrimination laws.

The issue of whether the Navy will comply with San Francisco's laws was raised by State Assemblyman Art Agnos in a recent mayoral candidate's debate. Agnos pointed out in the debate with City Supervisor John Molinari that the latest Department of Defense regulations prohibit enlistment of those who engage in "perverted or deviant sexual behavior," which includes transsexualism, transvestism, exhibitionism, incest, child molestation, voyeurism, bestiality, or sodomy.

Molinari, in response to Agnos' charge, co-sponsored an amendment to the city's agreement with the Navy that would refer discrimination cases to the San Francisco Human Rights Commission for arbitration. But Norm Nickens, director of the Commission, told *GCN* that the amendment "amounts to nothing . . . We have no control over enlistees, or over federal employees. This is not a legally binding document."

The amendment states, "It is the policy of the Navy, pursuant to federal law and regulations, and [of] the city not to discriminate against any civilian employee applicant for civilian employment or contractor because of sexual orientation." The amendment refers to Title Seven of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1978 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1967. None of these acts includes sexual orientation as a protected category.

Agnos and gay City Supervisor Harry Britt opposed the amendment.



Photo Graphics/Darlene

S.F. Supervisor Harry Britt at Aug. 21 meeting on Missouri.

ment and were particularly angered by the statement, "the Navy does not discriminate against lesbians and gay men." Britt, at an August 3 meeting of the Board of Supervisors, shouted, "That is a lie. Don't put that language in . . . Nothing is better than this hypocrisy. Harvey Milk

would not have allowed that lie to pass and neither will I."

The Board of Supervisors passed the amendment on August 21 by a 6-5 vote.

Molinari and San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein claim that the agreement is strong and that it is a "historic first for the gay community." Dennis Collins, Molinari's liaison to the gay community, said "This may not be as strong as Britt would have liked, but it is still very good. As far as I know this is the first time a city has ever forced the Navy into respecting the rights of its citizens." Collins pointed out that Britt is still supporting Molinari's campaign for mayor and accused Agnos of "political demagoguery." "Art Agnos had plenty of military contracts come across his desk while he served in the legislature and not once did he raise the issue," he said.

Cathy Gilberd of the Lawyer's Guild in San Diego said that even if the Navy abides by the anti-discrimination clause, only civilian employees are protected. Uniformed personnel are still bound by "homophobic and sexist regulations."

Director of the National Lawyers Guild in San Francisco Regina Sneed said the city of San Francisco has no legal means of enforcing the agreement with the

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Northeastern Charged in Gay Discrimination Suit

By Kim Westheimer

BOSTON — An assistant to the Dean of Nursing at Northeastern University has charged the school with discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation. A suit filed by the Boston-based Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) on August 18 contends that Angelo Loguidice faced harassment and termination of his job by Northeastern officials because of his gay rights activism.

Loguidice has worked at Northeastern for nine years and is also a doctoral student there. He is an original member of the university's Sexual Preference Coalition, an organization comprised of individuals appointed by Northeastern President Kenneth Ryder in 1983. Ryder, who is named as one of the defendants in

Loguidice to list all of his job responsibilities on the document used for reclassification.

Asserting that Long was harassing him because of his sexual orientation and gay rights activism, Loguidice filed a complaint with Northeastern's Affirmative Action Office in July of 1985. According to the suit, this complaint was not handled in a timely manner and was not resolved.

In May of 1986, Loguidice learned that his job fell under the lowest possible reclassification, adversely affecting his salary and opportunities for promotion. He subsequently was told his job was being eliminated as of June 1987 due to Northeastern's cost-containment program. According to

ed that Loguidice was unfairly treated with respect to his termination. No mention was made of anti-gay discrimination. The university then offered to extend Loguidice's term of employment until December 31, 1987, on the condition that he sign a university-prepared release stating he would not seek further damages for his grievances. Loguidice accepted the terms and signed the statement.

"I felt forced into signing [the prepared release]," said Loguidice at an August 18 press conference announcing the suit.

According to Kevin Cathcart, executive director of GLAD, Loguidice faced discrimination because he was "being so effective" and outspoken as a member of the Sexual Preference Coalition. He noted Loguidice's work as a gay activist was recorded in the campus newspaper and alumni newsletters.

Loguidice became a "pain in the ass" to the administration because he was doing such a good job on the coalition, concurred coalition member Joseph Caruso. He noted that a number of coalition members have been "phased out" of their positions at Northeastern.

"I was a scapegoat for a lot of administration harassment," said Loguidice. Speaking of his visibility as a gay activist, Loguidice added, "I was the person gay students called when they [wanted] some of their needs . . . handled."

Caruso claimed that Ryder established the Sexual Preference Coalition because it would "look good to liberals" connected with Northeastern. But Ryder never adopted recommendations made by the Coalition after it conducted a survey of homophobia on campus. In addition, according to



(L-R) Gale Glazer, Angelo Loguidice, Wendy Kaplan and Kevin Cathcart at press conference announcing suit against Northeastern U.

the suit, extended Northeastern's equal opportunity policy to protect lesbians and gay men in 1983.

According to the suit, Loguidice was told in June of 1985 that all administrative jobs in the College of Nursing were to be reclassified. Loguidice then met with School of Nursing Dean Juanita Long to record his job responsibilities for the planned job reclassification. Long, also named in the suit, refused to allow

Loguidice's was the only job eliminated out of sixty positions within the School of Nursing. In addition, the suit asserts that Northeastern's cost containment program was intended to eliminate jobs through normal attrition.

Loguidice filed another grievance in November of 1986, claiming his pending termination was discriminatory. Within a month, school officials determined

Doing the 'Old Boys' Work

News Commentary

By Veneita Porter

ATLANTA — The first Centers for Disease Control (CDC) conference on AIDS in the minority population was held here August 7 and 8. The meeting was billed as a way for minority community members and People Living With AIDS (PLWA) to help the CDC shape its agenda for the upcoming fiscal year. After six years of this health crisis the CDC has finally decided that minorities, who are disproportionately affected by AIDS, should be consulted about the allocation of funds to prevent the spread of the disease in our communities.

As a gay and lesbian activist who currently runs a community-based AIDS Project, my expectations for this gathering were limited. But for many of us working in the field, seeing the numbers of new people of color who came as participants gave us a sense of excitement about getting to know each other. (75 to 80 percent of those attending were people of color.)

We were also excited about finally having an opportunity to have input into government policies and fiscal management regarding AIDS in our communities. But that excitement changed to a sense of growing frustration and anger as it became evident that once again we were being called upon to help a white old-boys network deal with its racism and then

allow it to go on about its business. By the end of the weekend I was left with some frightening realizations and questions about the government's commitment to slowing the spread of this disease among minorities. I was also worried about the misconceptions I see in the Black community about how the AIDS crisis affects us and how we should proceed.

Although the conference included information, presentations and speeches by leading national figures, there was nothing in the structure of the conference that allowed for ongoing or continued input by people of color. As a response to this omission, three caucuses (Black and Hispanic, Asian, Native American) met to draw up resolutions voicing their objections. The CDC never took action on these resolutions, and CDC Director James D. Mason made his closing remarks without referring to them.

A serious flaw in the planning of the conference was the lack of time scheduled for participants to get together on our own. It's obvious to me the CDC is used to working with scientists, doctors and health care officials whose primary objectives at meetings like this are to gather scientific and technical information. But

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Northeastern

Continued from page 1

Wendy Kaplan, one of the lawyers representing Loguidice, Ryder actively stifled gay activism on campus. He prohibited Loguidice from distributing an AIDS information booklet because the use of words such as "condom" made it too explicit, said Kaplan. She added that when Loguidice and another member of the coalition

wrote a letter to Ryder complaining about this action, Loguidice received harassing phone calls and memos from members of the administration. This harassment reportedly stopped when Loguidice informed the administration that he had hired an attorney.

Northeastern Director of Public Relations Paul Jones, who Kaplan claims wrote one of the memos to Loguidice, said it is "simply not true" that Ryder prohibited the distribution of AIDS

education material.

Jones added he has not received a copy of the suit and that he cannot comment on a matter pending against the university.

Loguidice is suing for physical and mental stress in addition to income and tuition benefits he will lose if terminated. "Discrimination affects emotions and the sense of self. How can you view the rest of the world. It is not simply economic loss. It goes much deeper than that," said Gale Glazer, attorney for Loguidice.

CDC

Continued from page 1

when dealing with a culturally and ethnically diverse group like the one that attended this conference, time should be allowed for people to make contact with each other and to evaluate the proceedings. There needs to be time to stop and remember majority (in this case white) organization's agendas might not be the same as ours.

In several presentations, particularly Dr. Mason's, there were some disturbing equations drawn about AIDS and people of color. In explaining why people of color are disproportionately represented in AIDS statistics, he said that we are not genetically predisposed to AIDS, rather that the disease is associated with particular behaviors. Certain behaviors are associated with economic status (poverty), and poverty is associated with people of color.

There is no denying that poverty and other oppressions are co-factors in the large number of AIDS cases in communities of color. They are co-

factors in any disease. But Mason drew these equations without stating the important information that racism is a co-factor for poverty and powerlessness is a co-factor for drug abuse. It's not realistic to expect the CDC to take on this society's total disregard for the health and well-being of its poor, but it is realistic to expect a clear analysis of these issues and to identify what is lacking in CDC policies.

Perhaps the most chilling realization I came to at the conference was that many people of color who attended didn't understand the important ramifications some of the CDC's health policy suggestions have for our communities. "Confidential testing," as opposed to anonymous testing; "partner notification" (allowing health officials to contact past sexual partners and notify them of an AIDS diagnosis); and "routine TB measures," which include isolation and quarantine, were not questioned by participants—especially the non-activist majority. It's disturbing that most of the people at the conference didn't make the connection that poor people on

welfare and disability benefits have their records called up with much more frequency than those who are privately and securely employed, and will therefore be more vulnerable to these policies.

It also bothers me that middle class Blacks who attended the conference assume that because of their privilege they will be overlooked by this disease. They don't realize that when federal agencies and insurance agencies look at demographic and statistical information, they do not see individuals; they see classes and races of people.

Studies done in several large cities indicate Blacks are more likely to be misinformed about AIDS than their white counterparts. They are also more likely to be in favor of mandatory testing and quarantine. The message from these studies and from the conference is clear—not only is basic AIDS information needed in our communities, but a national progressive organization, hopefully a minority-identified one, needs to do some major political and ethnic analysis of why our folks are willing to do the old boys' work.

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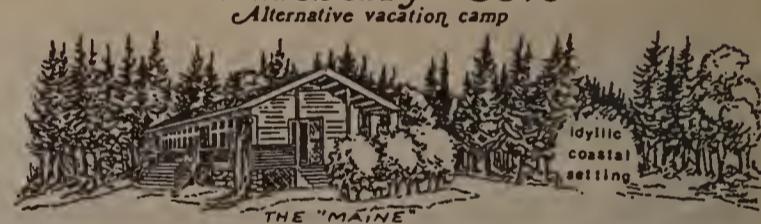
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Feds Issue Subpoena in Dobson Sex Case

By Kim Westheimer

BOSTON — Activists claim federal officials have harassed two men for their involvement in a sex case concerning a Boston-area man and two Puerto Rican teenagers.

The federal case is against Donald Dobson, who is charged with having sex with two teens. (See *GCN* Vol. 15, No. 6) The teens lived with Dobson from December 1986 until they were removed in February of this year. The boys are being held against their will as "material witnesses" in the case.

A Latino member of the Committee for Civil Liberties and Sexual Freedom (CCLSF), who spoke to one of the teenagers and his mother, was subpoenaed by a federal grand jury. The investigation concerns "possible witness tampering and violation of federal court orders." The man, who could not be reached for comment, is scheduled to appear before the grand jury on August 24.

Another committee member was questioned at his home on August 14 by Customs officials investigating the Dobson case. Jose DeJesus said the two officials questioned him about a recent conversation he had with the mother of one of the teenagers.

U.S. Customs is involved in the case because the teenagers were "transported across state lines for illegal sexual activity," according to Customs spokesperson Edward Callahan. Callahan said Customs would not be involved if the teenagers had not been transported from "Rhode Island to Massachusetts." The teenagers in the Dobson case were "coming

into the country from inside the U.S., even though they were coming in from [Puerto Rico] a possession [of the U.S.]," said Callahan.

The visit by Customs and the grand jury subpoena constitute harassment, commented committee member French Wall. "We have not done anything improper. We're trying to find out why [the teenagers] are being incarcerated [and if they] are satisfied with their legal representation. It's clear there's no obstruction of justice on our parts. There is a gross violation of justice [by the federal government] and they're seeking to make sure it's not going to come to light."

"It may be that the feds feel sensitive because they are already in trouble because of what they did with these kids—but I don't know," said Richard Iandoli, an attorney who has been in contact with the subpoenaed Committee member.

"We've been open and above board," asserted Tom Reeves, also a member of CCLSF. "We went directly to the U.S. Attorney's office with information [from the conversations with the teenager and his mother]."

The conversation with the mother was intended to let her know about the Committee, give her information about her son and find out if she wanted custody of her son, said DeJesus. "I was under the impression she was not aware of what was going on. In terms of custody, she was interested in helping out, but not able to take [him] back home."

According to Reeves, the teenager who was contacted had

many complaints about the conditions of his incarceration. He said there was only one Spanish-speaking staff member where he was being held. He explained he wanted to go back to his mother in Puerto Rico, but if that was not possible he would even prefer to be locked up in Puerto Rico.

The Committee has attempted to meet with Susan Via, Assistant U.S. Attorney, to voice some of its concerns about the case. Via refused to meet with them.

Angered by the inaccessibility of the U.S. Attorney's office, four committee members went to the Federal office on August 19 to demand a meeting with U.S. Attorney Frank MacNamara.

Instead of meeting with MacNamara, the Committee members had a short confrontation with the Chief of the Criminal Division in the U.S. Attorney's office, Gary Crossen. Crossen repeatedly stated that no one from the office would meet with the Committee without an appointment and that MacNamara could not discuss the Dobson case because it was pending. "I understand you think that I'm being unreasonable, but that's not for you to determine," said Crossen. "Book an appointment like the rest of us."

When questioned by committee member Robert Wheatley about his hostile attitude, Crossen said, "I tend to put people in jail and don't put up with this baloney too often."

Committee members suspect Crossen may be hostile because he was a prosecutor in the Suffolk County District Attorney's office during the Revere sex scandal in the mid-seventies. In a phone in-

terview with *GCN* Crossen acknowledged he had prosecuted a gay man, Mark Davis, in that case. The case alleged that 24 men were involved in a child porn and prostitution ring. The District Attorney's office only garnered enough evidence to prosecute two of the 24 men.

Crossen also told *GCN* that no one in the US Attorney's office will meet with the committee.

CCLSF formed this year in response to the Dobson case and others like it. The organization's

literature states it is "concerned with the rights of all persons involved in legal cases where sexual activity is alleged between gay men or lesbians and teenagers. The committee will involve itself only in cases where it is satisfied that no actual rape or other violence or coercion took place. The committee may take actions on behalf of both defendants and alleged victims in such cases but will not work directly with defendant's counsel and will act independently."

Navy v. Queers

Continued from page 1

Navy. According to legal experts, federal law supersedes local law in this case. Since Title Seven of the Federal Code prohibits discrimination based on race, sex and age but does not mention sexual preference, Sneed said that Congress would have to amend Title Seven in order to force the military to comply with the city's laws.

Feinstein, who threatened to withdraw her endorsement of Molinari for mayor if he voted against the Navy, has lobbied extensively for the porting. She argues that it would create as many as 2,000 new jobs for the depressed Hunters Point shipyard area of the city. She claims the city has been economically damaged by the recent loss of several major corporate headquarters. Last fall, in a city-wide referendum, strict limits were imposed on new construction.

Opponents of homeporting cite

several problems in addition to the Navy's history of homophobia. Sneed told *GCN* that *The Missouri* should not be ported regardless of the discrimination issue. She said the ecological damage to the San Francisco Bay could be considerable. More importantly, taxpayer money used for the port should not be spent on "a war machine—this is a peace-loving city," she said. The *Missouri* patrols international waters off Nicaragua and the straits of Hormuz near Iran.

The Board of Supervisors will take its final vote on homeporting the *Missouri* and its 10-ship fleet after the Environmental Protection Agency files an Environmental Impact Report on the effect of porting to the San Francisco Bay and surrounding areas.

—filed from Boston
(San Francisco reporter Charles Linebarger contributed to this report.)

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Community Voices

GCN NOTES

Vacation Time!

Wondering how you'll get through a 24-page *GCN* in one week? No problem; we're off next week. The offices will be closed from Friday night, August 21, until Monday at 10 a.m., August 31. Meanwhile, enjoy the enclosed Lesbian Prisoners Supplement.

Name Change

And the "conservatives" have it! Well, the ones who voted to conserve the name, that is. Forty members voted to keep the same name and four voted to change to *Gay & Lesbian Community News*. One woman who voted to keep *GCN* made a good suggestion: emphasize the subtitle "The Weekly for Lesbians and Gay Males." (Watch for the redesigned version of *GCN* next issue.)

lesbianism as convenience

Dear *GCN*:

I am a 28 year old lesbian and, unfortunately, at this time also incarcerated at Mass. Correctional Institution in Lancaster. I have a constant conflict going on inside of me and it pertains to the abuse of lesbianism.

I see abuse all the time. To the majority of women here, lesbianism is a matter of convenience, a game they are playing with each other. Women who have been abused on the street by men come to prison and, in turn, abuse other women—not necessarily just physically but mentally as well.

I have been a lesbian for 13 years now. I take my feelings and lifestyle very seriously. I really hurt inside when I see this abuse because I know the pride that I feel for lesbians. I have been here for several years and have had no relationships because I can wait for the beauty of it all.

One of the games the women here play on each other is pretending to care for one another: only for what they can get out of it (i.e. things from the store, packages, etc.) This place seems, for the most part, to be a breeding ground for the continuous use and abuse of women.

In my experience in prison I have yet to see a relationship go beyond the doors of the prison. Prison, as far as I can see, produces assembly line love. As one walks out the door there's one waiting in the wings.

While some women are in a relationship here with another woman, they are at the same time

continuing relationships, through the mail, with their men.

I don't feel the women here take their lesbian relationships realistically. They abuse the feeling that comes from lesbianism and make a mockery of women loving other women.

I am grateful for having experienced a true lesbian relationship prior to my incarceration because this place would have turned me off to a beautiful thing.

If you're a lesbian and you have a lover on the outside there is little or no hope of keeping that relationship alive, and that definitely goes for the relationships inside.

I have yet to see any racism problems between lesbians in prison. The administration tries to stir up trouble between the women in any way, color or form that they can. The administration will also do anything in their power to break up a lesbian relationship (i.e. separate them, give them different work schedules, threaten them with being isolated).

Women in prison need support groups. As it stands now they have little or none. Lesbians have no support at all. We need people from the gay community to show us that they are there and they care about what's going on with us.

Sincerely,
Tracie McGuinness
Box 123
Lancaster, MA 01523

i found myself behind prison walls

Dear *GCN*:

Presently I am incarcerated at the women's Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Framingham. However, I will be leaving in the middle of September of '87. Up until I came here my feelings have been suppressed. But *GCN* has given me a new perspective in which I have found comfort.

Enclosed is a copy of a poem I wrote for a very special woman whom I fell in love with and I hope to see once I get released. I would greatly appreciate it if you published this poem.

Thank you,
Debi Josseline

I Found Myself

To R.R.J.

I found myself behind prison walls,
it wasn't easy, not easy at all
I thought I knew myself inside and out
but when I came to jail I came with doubts.
Doubts about feelings and things I like to do,

I said to myself, it's time to be you.
See I lived with a man I hated so,
I was too afraid to let him go.
I had this attraction to women, you see,
but something inside wouldn't set those
feelings free.
I once had a love affair that didn't last
very long, drugs came between us and
soon she was gone.
I thought and thought, is this way of life really
for me? I wanted it badly except doing drugs
one can't see.
I ended up in jail in the year 1986, and
much to my surprise my feelings were fixed.
I fell in love with a woman so strong and yet so
weak; her eyes they glow like crystal, her smile
is just so sweet.
In ways I'm glad I came here for I've found
myself you see, I'm a proud gay woman as
happy as can be. (with love, Debi)

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to set the record "straight"

Dear *GCN*:

Eric Rofes' description of the rally and civil disobedience at the White House on June 1st (*GCN*, 8/8/87) is accurate in letter and in spirit—except for one important detail. "The action was planned by a group of activists throughout the nation spearheaded" not by the Human Rights Campaign Fund, but by two New York AIDS activist organizations: ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and the Lavender Hill Mob.

The demo was conceived and planned at ACT UP meetings in the latter part of April and early May as a protest against federal AIDS policy and mainstream gay organizations who do little more than solicit money and pay their office rent, while gay men die because of the government's malign neglect. ACT UP sent a representative of its logistics committee to Washington to reconnoiter both the White House area and the site of the Third International AIDS Conference. Our representatives also started negotiations with the Washington police. Michael Petrelis of the Lavender Hill Mob flew to the West Coast to enlist support from activist groups there.

Just two weeks before the event, Vic Basile of the Human Rights Campaign Fund, apparently realizing that something big was under way, appeared at an ACT UP meeting in New York with an offer to help provide the flowers, secure the church hall as a staging area, finish negotiations with the Washington police, etc. ACT UP accepted, even though its plans had been pretty much already solidified. We're all fighting the same fight, so we thought, not realizing that the other group was mostly interested in the publicity for its own benefit.

On June 1st, ACT UP sent three busloads of participants to Washington, all wearing black T-shirts with the ACT UP slogan, "Silence = Death," which when combined with the pink triangle (apex pointing up) forms our logo. Both the slogan and the logo were conceived by the ACT UP projects committee. Check the pictures from the demo in *Newsweek*, *Time*, *U.S. News*, *Paris Match*, etc., and count the number of "Silence = Death" T-shirts and black placards with the same device. Then you'll know whose demo it was. Members of the Lavender Hill Mob in their all-white trousers and jackets with the lavender crosses appear in the same photos and in the United Press International wire photos from inside the conference. The same groups appeared on the national news feeds of all three TV networks.

Ordinarily we wouldn't care about such a childish thing as "credit" and "who had the idea first," but we resent being undercut and exploited by an organization which, in Rofes' own words, is "oriented toward press conferences and schmoozing with politicians" while gay men die, and is still apparently more interested in publicity than in forcing the federal government to get serious about fighting the pandemic.

And from you, *GCN*, we expect a more accurate reporting of the news.

Yours very truly,
Henry J. Yeager
New York, NY

french indifference to foreigners

Dear *GCN*:

I enjoyed W.J. Deltour's "In Perpetual Exile" (Aug. 9-15, 1987) since I too lived in France—for 18 years. I found it easier to come out there than if I had been back here, not because the French are any more tolerant towards gays and lesbians than Americans are, but because it is always easier to live in a country where you are far away from the pressures of your family and your past, in a culture that's indifferent to what you do because you're not "one of theirs." French indifference to foreigners leaves a lot of people free to do as they please. You can be gay in France as long as you don't talk about it (who you sleep with is your private life, right?), and especially as long as you don't say it has anything to do with politics. French society deals with our choice by belittling its significance and keeping us in the closet. I'm glad to be living in Boston and Provincetown now.

Yours with pride,
Jacqueline Lapidus
Brighton, MA

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SPEAKING OUT/REACHING IN



committed to unity

Dear GCN:

I am a woman who has been imprisoned within the barbed wire fences of MCI Framingham on and off for several years. I have been controlled by the "correctional system" for a while, and I have been controlled by the larger system all of my life.

One of the major things I see happening here at Framingham is a lack of unity of inmates with other inmates and, more importantly, of women with other women. This apathy was initiated and perpetuated by the Administration.

Racism and sexism permeate the entire institution—from who gets classified out of here to who does or does not get sent to Max [Maximum security]. Definite consideration and leniency are directed to white women. Black and Spanish women have to deal with the inadequacies and frustration of the Administration, which comes through fear, hatred, and discrimination.

The Administration uses women's fears of losing parole, being sent to Max, getting D-Reports as tools to stop women from voicing their objections to any institutional policy.

Consequently, because of fear of reprisal, the inmate population divides itself on every basis—including color, access to money, type of crime, drug use, or religion. We argue among ourselves over petty things like the kitchen, the telephone, or the washing machine instead of trying to unite ourselves against the treatment that really hurts us.

The institution loves to see a racially motivated incident so they can first, punish; second, admonish; and last, feel pleased that women are fighting among themselves. They are dependent on "reliable informant information" and, at the same time, say they have no use for informers. The technique of divide and conquer not only works but is alive and well here at MCI Framingham.

The system is hypocritical and bigoted and is, itself, the biggest reason for the high rate of recidivism [return to prison]. Incorporated in this sick mentality is a condescending attitude towards women criminals and, I feel, towards women in general.

Women inmates say they realize what the system is really all about, and yet we act just the opposite. We treat each other with hate instead of directing that hate to our real enemy. There are common factors among all of us who are incarcerated here. We are all prisoners, we are all women, and we have all been—and continue to be—pawns for the prison "business" and victims of the power structure to which it adheres.

When we all recognize our common denominator and stop feeding into the lies and hypocrisy, we will be able to stand together and effect some kind of change. Until then, the struggle goes on.

Sincerely,
A "committed" inmate

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Teach me something . . .

Here I am
I'm in your system
Teach me something.
I came from your society
I will return to your society
For this is my society also
Teach me something
Where can I survive
mopping floors
for a living
I have dreams too
And my dreams
are not
about mopping floors.
You have me in your system
With your \$100.00 word —
Rehabilitation, with a capital R
a policy word,
sounds good at an open forum.
So . . . Teach me something
Something about your society
My society — that cares so much.
I can't break laws for money
I can't use drugs for escape
Yet . . .
You won't teach me something.
(Or allow me to teach myself)

—Naomi Papale

This is a special *Gay Community News* supplement on lesbians in prison. It is our hope that it will enlarge the community of advocates and friends who reach in through the walls to break the separation between inside and out.

Our thanks to all the prisoners who contributed to this supplement and to the Open Meadows Foundation of New York for providing funding.

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POLITICS



coming out: need a place to start over

Dear Mike:

I have written you on many occasions and now I would like to know if you could help in this matter. I will be going up for parole in May of 88 and feel that the penal system, as well as the Parole Board in this state and maybe other states won't allow inmates to receive their freedom because of no parole plan. So in that case they must do another year locked up and then may be in the same situation the next year.

The counselors that are given to you do just enough to make it look like they have done all that they can, when you know that they haven't. They get in touch with you 3 weeks before you go up for parole which anybody with any intelligence knows that isn't enough time.

Myself, I've been in this situation before, for this is not my first time being locked up. I've been paroled to Christian people and the environment didn't work because of myself being a lesbian.

Virginia is not a place to look for a place that will help prisoners that are gay, because their so hidden, you don't know where to look, at least I don't.

I realize May is a ways away, but at the same time my freedom is just around the corner, and would like it to be that way if I could find someone that could help me with a parole plan. I have no ties anywhere or no family. So my parole plan could be anywhere. Some place, some body that would like to help out an inmate that just wants sometime to get back on her feet and start her life over.

I know there are a lot of men and women that are in the same situation as myself and something needs to be done! True, nothing will be handed to us on a silver platter whether we are homosexual, or heterosexual. But either way inmates in this situation need a place to start over.

People do a lot of agreeing but nothing seems to be getting done. If one person would start I believe others would step forward. Will there be one person to take that first step???

I will hope that the GCN paper will put this in their paper and someone will see this not only for my sake but for all others that are in the same situation as myself. I can speak for myself I don't want a free ride, just some one that understands and knows that everyone, no matter who they are desires a chance. And not to be turned down in their wish for FREEDOM, BECAUSE of no place to go.

I thank you Mike, and the GCN for what ever you have done for all inmates. I feel that this paper has helped in many ways that a lot of people in the outside world are not even aware of. Sincerely,

Susan Bailey
Box 1
Goochland, VA 23063

Telling someone

By Susan Saxe

It was difficult to know where or how to begin this article. Whatever I may have to say has already been said again and again, in books, articles, studies and reports. It has been said by radicals, liberals, even conservatives. It has been said by captives and by those who keep them captive, by impassioned advocates and by "detached" scholars and professionals. And so little changes.

What has been said so many times is that the system doesn't work. Prisons don't prevent crime any more than nuclear weapons prevent war. The evidence is in, but we remain addicted to caging human beings very much in the same way we remain addicted to megabuck defense spending. These are false solutions that gorge on our limited resources while fueling and expanding the very problems they were meant to resolve.

Perhaps it is because of my personal experience (I was on the inside of various prisons and jails from 1975 to 1982) that I am constantly confronting the connections between the "criminal justice" issue and other issues I work on, including gay/lesbian issues, reproductive rights, domestic violence and the rights of persons with disabilities. It seems to come up so often and so obviously that it is hard to imagine that others don't just naturally make the connection.

Abuse or Death or...?

Here is just one example: A friend of mine who works for a shelter for abused women had to go to court with a client and watch her get a five-year mandatory sentence under Pennsylvania's gun law for shooting her abuser with his own gun. Where was the law when her abuser threatened her and her children with the same gun? The judge who sentenced her had no choice. She is actually working with others in the legal field to amend the law. Surely the legislature didn't intend it to have this effect...or did it?

But this was not an isolated case. Other battered women are already serving mandatory sentences under this law. Some were even brought back to jail after serving and being released from lesser sentences handed down by judges who believed that the mandatory sentencing gun law was not meant to apply to battered women acting in self-defense.

But the state, in its impersonal wisdom, appealed for its pound of flesh and won. And so women who had already suffered at the hands of their batterers and again at the hands of the courts, who had picked up the remnants of their lives and their children's lives and started over, were without ceremony scooped up and deposited in jail for five years. These women represent no threat to anyone, or do they? Is it so threatening to the men who make our laws that women should want some alternative to abuse or death?

Who Goes to Jail?

But after all, who is it that goes to jail anyway? My own experience among women in prison tells me, as numerous studies and observations of others have shown, that an overwhelming majority of incarcerated women began as victims of child abuse. What differentiates them from all the rest of the abused women who do not go to jail? Not much, except that like the battered women who finally turned on their attackers, they sometimes fought back. They rebelled against their abusers, became throw-away or run-away children, were jailed, or were placed in institutions by parents who saw them as "crazy" or "delinquent."

Again the message is the same: Submit to abuse in private by a parent, husband or boyfriend, or fall prey to abuse by strangers—the pimps and pushers on the street or the social workers, wardens, officers and attendants in the prisons, mental hospitals and detention centers.

We Want Them Out of Sight

For the past couple of years, in addition to working on a host of progressive issues ranging from Central America to abortion rights, I have been employed by agencies which advocate for persons with severe disabilities. We try to enhance their lives and eliminate the isolation, marginalization and abuse they have traditionally suffered

at the hands of our society at large or in some of its many institutions.

In one horrible case that recently came to light, Gary Heidnik, a man with a history of mental illness, preyed upon, imprisoned, tortured, and murdered several mentally retarded women over a period of years. I share every ounce of horror and outrage expressed by the media, the "experts" and the gawking public. But my knowledge of what happens daily to thousands of inmates in the modern-day snakepits that are our "hospitals," "training schools," and "homes" will not allow me to stop with mere anger toward an individual.

Every day people are starved, raped, beaten, and even killed in institutions. They are tied to chairs or lie naked—freezing or sweltering as the season dictates—in their own body wastes. They are drugged into oblivion or left to scream in physical and mental torment for years on end. But this is done by "professionals" licensed by the state; our taxes pay them to administer these legal torture chambers. When some of the worst cases are discovered we are shocked, maybe sickened, but where are the cries for revenge, for justice, for assurance that this will never happen again?

Frankly, I don't think most of us care. We don't know or don't want to know. We want "those people" kept out of sight and out of mind. And when an individual commits acts that we recognize as atrocities, we want him put out of sight with the rest of them. Well, Gary Heidnik was jailed before, and you can bet that prison did more to ensure that he *would* commit future violence than to deter him from it. And who was the target of his pent-up rage? Not the powerful, but the most needy and helpless people he could find.

So Gary Heidnik carried out his revenge on his victims, and we are outraged. But the same abuses, committed in our names by those duly authorized, just make us a little uncomfortable for a while. State-sanctioned crimes are not crimes.

The Heidnik case also makes me wonder about the neighbors who heard noises, who smelled burning flesh, who were aware of suspicious disappearances, who saw the screaming women dragged into the car, but who did nothing. It makes me wonder about the police who were called and who couldn't seem to do anything. Where is it written that the odor of burning marijuana is probable cause to search a house but the smell of burning women is not?

There's something we all have in common with the neighbors who "didn't know" or wouldn't notice the smell of burning flesh and the good Germans (and others) who "didn't know" what was being burned in those smoking furnaces outside their villages. It's that something that makes us deaf to the cries of an abused child next door, that enables us to step over a human being lying on a steam vent and go on about our business, that prevents us from identifying with a peasant being bombed in some village somewhere far away. We don't know because we don't want to know, because knowing demands action.

I am convinced that when the Heidnik case is finally unraveled, that somewhere there will be someone, a relative, a neighbor, a minister or teacher, someone who "didn't hear" the cries of little two-year-old or little five-year-old Gary Heidnik, a community that didn't respond because they "didn't know" that he was being abused. I am convinced that no one could do what he did without having experienced savage abuse himself. And I am equally convinced that when it happened, someone knew and did nothing.

The Heidniks and the Hitlers come from our not wanting to get involved. They eventually get sent to places where we hope we won't ever have to think about them again—prisons, hospitals, history books.

In the abuse prevention movement we teach children that if they are being abused, they should tell an adult, and they should tell and tell and keep telling until they get help. Children had better be prepared to tell and tell because in this world you have to do a lot of telling before help comes. I guess that's as good a reason as any for writing this article—to keep telling until someone hears, and to remind us all, myself included, to listen and to help.

'Criminal' — not an identity

The crimes women commit are not an important part of the identity they claim for themselves. This point was made in an essay we read while preparing this supplement. It seems so obvious, and yet, people are so interested in asking what a woman's crime was! Women in prison generally don't ask and don't know about one another's alleged crimes—except, of course, for those cases that achieve notoriety in the press. People seem to think that women treat one another differently depending on their crime, and even women inside might tell you that a woman convicted of a crime like child abuse is always shunned by other women. But what I have observed is women being treated by one another according to who they are as human beings. If a woman is perceived as being vulnerable, she will be protected. If she is straightforward and trustworthy, she will be respected. And if she is hostile, she will be ostracized.

—Andrea Devine

Eat-In

Women at MCI Framingham recently staged a highly organized and highly successful disruption. When the administration cut back on canteen and package "privileges," women responded with the "Eat-In"—one day they all went to the institution's dining hall for meals. Sounds orderly enough. But women generally don't go near the dining hall and its awful food if they have another option. That option is cooking in the cottages using food that is either purchased in the canteen or received in packages. The Eat-In successfully demonstrated the state's dependence on women's own resources. The dining hall was overwhelmed, the result was chaos, but not a rule was broken.

—Andrea Devine



Editorial: prisoners are part of the movement

The following section is an excerpt from conversations between the editors during the nine months we worked on this project. Bits and pieces of our conversations are also scattered throughout these pages. We talked about what we were hoping to do, what we think we really did do, and what some of our frustrations are.

MR: One thing that this supplement could do is make it clear how important inside-outside contact is.... If we could encourage people on the outside to feel the power of their own going in and coming out, writing letters, and being in touch, the power that can reduce abuse and make poor people feel like when they come out they've got something, they've got connections. I hope we encourage people to feel prisoners are members of our community, are friends of ours.

Why Don't People Want Prisoners as Part of "Our Movement?"

DL: Fear I think... It's complex. On the one hand, people recognize how easily it could be them, and I think it hits a little too close to home. Almost everyone has the potential to be imprisoned, and some people end up there, not specifically because of what they've done, but just because of the way they draw the cards. Also, some people think, "What if I get in touch with a prisoner and connect with them and then they get out and decide to look me up and who knows, do what?..."

MR: That's the thing that strikes me more. I don't have the impression that people think, "there but for the grace of whatever, go I." I have the impression that people feel very self-righteous: "I'm not in there; they're in there; they must be in there for some reason." That's what leads to the fear that you're talking about, that "I don't want to make contact because when they get out, they'll depend on me, they'll hurt me, whatever, they're different from me."

AD: The thing that moves me the most is the recognition that prisoners aren't different from me. There are all kinds of women in prison. Yes, there are groups of women who are overrepresented—women of color, certainly poor women; women do, of course, tend to have certain things in common—like a family history of sexual abuse, a personal history of substance abuse, certainly poverty—but who a human being is relies on more than these factors. The first time I found myself in the corridor of the Administration Building at MCI Framingham with the opportunity to observe a truly random sampling of the women incarcerated there, I was struck by how obvious it was that *all* kinds of women are there—and every stereotype about who women in prison are is defied. The generalizations are useful in order to show what's wrong with society, but there's a reality that the generalizations hide. I can look back on my own life and see that if only one little thing or another had gone differently, I could have ended up in prison, too. But if I hadn't had the opportunity to work at MCI Framingham, if I hadn't had the chance to hear so much from women about their own lives, I might never have recognized that reality; that *it could* women. If I hadn't known women. If I

TS: But what is it within us that prevents us from taking those initial steps? Or from taking more steps, or from talking about prison issues to our friends more often?... I think some people think it's kind of bizarre that I have this interest in prisoners.

AD: It's sort of like you have that social worker mentality....

TS: Maybe it's that, maybe it's the idea that this is not really a political problem....

MR: Well, that's the thing that deserves being addressed... why people who can get together to do something besides survive don't think that the criminal justice business is every bit as political as, say, foreign policy?

TS: The prison system is so entrenched. I think people say "How could we ever change this?" It's a reflection of the total "system." The prisons are where we put all the people we don't want to deal with, so why should political people

focus on prisons when it seems to be such a hopeless case? It's the same question I find myself asking about work with homeless women. How are you going to get homeless women to lobby for their own rights and help change society when they've got all these basic economic survival things, and self-esteem issues and everything else to deal with? Why focus on them? But you know that I interviewed a woman who has worked with homeless women, and I asked her why she does this work, and she said, "Well, I have learned so much from these women, they have survived all these horrible things and yet they have such an ability to get past some of these...."

MR: Exactly! It's inspiring. These prisoners manage to resist in the midst of these cages. It really gives me energy. And the other side of that hopelessness business is the fact that the prisons, the homeless clarify a whole lot of how society works. When you get in there and start looking you see connections everywhere. That's what makes it look so hopeless — you can't just go to prisons because once you do prisons, you have to do racism, and poverty; everything gets in there.

SP: I really don't know that most people even get to the point of thinking that it's hopeless. That's a pretty advanced kind of theory. More people probably think, "Criminals should be put away. What option is there? I'm afraid of these people. I don't want people coming out of prison and murdering me!" There's this assumption that there's really nothing better than prison. What else can you do with somebody who... and the assumption is that everyone is a murderer....

DL: Well, when people talk like that maybe you should be pointing out to them that most women in prison are in there for economic crimes, for survival, and when they are in there for murder, a lot of times it's because they killed their husband who was battering them for years and years, or raped them, or....

TS: That's true, but a lot of people will say, "Well, what are you going to do about violent criminals?" And we believe that prison doesn't do any good for anybody including violent criminals, so I don't know how to get any farther with that argument. I always end up there and say, "well, alternatives..." but how do you get past someone's mentality that you've got to prevent these violent and dangerous things from happening again and prison is as good a way as any to deal with it?

AD: The fact is thousands and thousands of people are in prison for non-violent crimes. They're there because prison is an integral part of institutionalized oppression, and it's the cutting edge of racist repression... it's a piece of how this society functions and keeps us all under control and the potential for tremendous expansion is always there....

MR: Well, the expansion is happening, folks, it's happening, and part of the secret is that it keeps itself so secret and so invisible and it happens so quietly, and we're just expanding like mad. At Prison Book [a Boston program sending books to prisoners], we're getting new addresses all the time, every state. Most states are building new prisons, two or three at a time. They don't have libraries, of course, at the start—"We don't have that in our budget, we've got to build these beds that cost fifty thousand apiece," and whatever....

DL: What kills me is they say they spend, what, thirty thousand or forty or whatever a year on each prisoner. When I was in prison, I didn't live as if I had thirty thousand a year.... That always kills me when I read that....

MR: You mentioned alternatives, and rather than just let that go completely by, I would like us to note that this is a weakness in our supplement — we didn't manage to get together some material on alternatives to incarceration.... We didn't even go after it. There's a lot that could be done and we didn't really talk about it.

TS: We focused on trying to get material that would let people know that prisoners are human beings. It seems like that was the first priority.

The law's lies

By Naomi Papale

Franz Kafka's parable "Before the Law" describes a "man from the country who begs for admittance to the Law." But a doorkeeper, who is standing guard at the entrance of the Law, tells the man he cannot admit him "at the moment." The man from the country thinks, "The Law should surely be accessible at all times and to everyone," but as he takes a closer look at the doorkeeper, he decides it is better to wait until he gets permission to enter." The doorkeeper delays "the moment" indefinitely so that the man never gains access to the Law.

We are programmed to believe that the judicial system is just in its decision-making process, so we automatically accept its verdict as honest and ethical. The societal values we learn in the course of growing up teach us to put our faith in those above us. In this case, the law and the judicial system are above us because we are not taught the procedures of the system, but only what it represents: power.

As incarcerated persons, we are like "the man from the country," inasmuch as we are naively trusting in the law and uninformed of our right to legal access. We place our trust in the representatives of the system (i.e. attorneys, judges, police officials, and correctional officials), who sometimes seem to stand, like so many doorkeepers, between us and the law.

Informing ourselves about the law often becomes an obsession once freedom is lost—knowledge of the law may be our one hope for regaining freedom. But incarceration itself limits our access to the law. We often must wait through the trial and sentencing processes, relying on the advice of attorneys and the decisions of judges. As imprisoned persons we are told we have the right of access to the law, but in actuality our confinement virtually denies us any access. Consequently we are like the man in the parable who waits for days and years to gain access to the law.

There are many other reasons in-

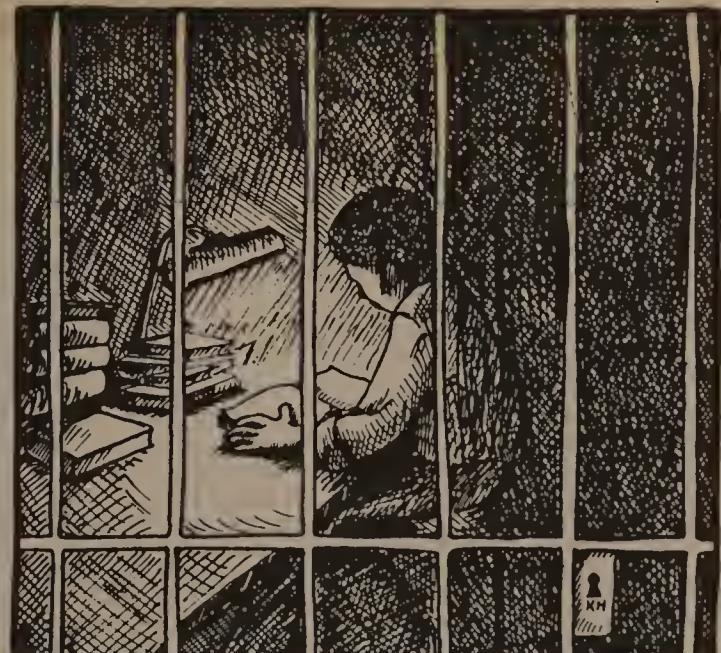
that while she is detained awaiting trial, her attorney or attorney's representative will be allowed to meet with her and prepare her case. However, because M.C.I. Framingham is the only women's jail in Massachusetts, attorneys must travel across the state to provide proper legal counsel for their clients. Only collect calls can be made from the institution; therefore, access is further limited. Public defenders are paid for only five hours work on each case, including research time, client meetings, and court appearances, yet they may file motions within the court to be granted a reasonable amount of hours to prepare a case for trial. This may result in cases being disposed of through plea bargaining, which is often not in women's best interests.

Jail-House Lawyer

In seeking some relief from the injustices of justice, some of us succeed in teaching ourselves the elements of court procedure and the workings of the law. We thus become "jailhouse lawyers" and assist our peers in any legal relief deemed necessary. Sometimes we even receive official recognition from administrators and are designated Inmate Law Library Clerks.

The position of a Law Library Clerk is somewhat paradoxical, since that individual works providing legal assistance within the same system that prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced her. There seems to be an opinion that "jail-house lawyers" have nothing better to do with their time than stir up trouble in the name of rebellion, with civil suits against the state. This is a misconception of the job description.

For many incarcerated persons an Inmate Law Library Clerk is the closest thing to a lawyer or form of legal assistance to which they have access. She is someone they look to for assistance, to clarify matters they cannot understand themselves. Knowledge of the law becomes contradictory when many of those imprisoned hear numerous interpretations of the law from their peers.



carcerated women lack knowledge of the law. Many have not been fortunate in acquiring an education, for economic, cultural, and domestic reasons.¹ Some women are ashamed of their crime and do not wish to discuss it. Some believe in the system and since the system does not offer or provide any suggestion of recourse, they assume none exists. There is also the weight of despair which causes a few to disregard the options open to them.

One example is the inaccessibility of legal information to women in the Maximum Security Unit (MAX). These women are allowed to use the Law Library by request only, and although access is granted, it is severely limited. The problem is that each inmate must know exactly what it is she is seeking and where to look for it. MAX women are segregated from the general prison population, and are allowed in the Law Library only in the presence of a correctional officer or Department of Corrections staffperson. This effectively deprives women in the Maximum Security Unit of their right to legal assistance. Many women in the MAX unit are not aware of the rights they have or of how to proceed in researching the matter they are seeking to resolve.

Another example is the situation of women in the Awaiting Trial Unit. These women do not have access to the Law Library in any way. It is assumed that a woman awaiting trial has the same legal access as a person on the street. This means

Thus, the Law Library Clerk becomes the jailhouse's lawyer.

For administrators, the definition holds a meaning of a different nature; in fact, they believe Law Library Clerks are disruptive and seek to defy authority through the course of the law. Is it possible that these delegates of the law fear that the jail-house lawyer will rightfully interpret the law in seeking justice and challenging the system through the proper channels?

Throughout the course of writing this article I have tried to remain detached. To write as an observer without imposing my personal feelings on the reader has been very difficult for me. But I do feel that there is not a better example of the absurdities confronting us in gaining access to the law than this: two weeks prior to the completion of my internship, I was administratively slapped in the face, so to speak. The institution librarian transferred me to a new job assignment. I was transferred from the Law Library to the Institutional Work Crew as a yard cleaner, what is commonly referred to as "Litter Patrol."

Not only did this pose a problem with reference to time in finishing this article, but it demonstrates the frustration of the powerlessness in gaining skills or using acquired skills. It deprives my fellow inmates of my legal assistance as it deprives me of utilizing the skills I have acquired in nine months of working as a Law Library Clerk.

Political prisoners

By Shelley Miller

In 1983 I was called to a federal grand jury investigating the Puerto Rican independence movement in general and the FALN, an armed clandestine organization for Puerto Rican independence, in particular. I had worked and continue to work as the national co-coordinator of the New Movement in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence and Socialism. When I, along with nine other people—five Puerto Ricans, two Mexicans and two other North American women—refused to testify, we were charged with criminal contempt, brought to trial and convicted. I spent two years at Alderson Federal prison for women and was released on January 30 of this year.

The U.S. government denies there are any political prisoner in the U.S.. But it is clear they target politically active people in a particular manner. My own experience is a case in point. From the beginning of my jail time, after having been out on bail for two years, I was treated as an escape risk. For five months I was "on the card"—a special monitoring system for "dangerous" prisoners.

The harassment I experienced was relatively minor compared to what other political prisoners doing much longer sentences endure. Of the almost 20 women political prisoners still inside, the shortest sentence is 20 years. Some have more than 50 years. (This doesn't include the anti-nuclear Plowshares women whose sentences range from 6-12 years.)

But long sentences are only one part of the government's attack on such women. Before I was imprisoned I heard stories about the Puerto Rican women who had been captured as part of the armed clandestine movement for their country's freedom and had declared themselves prisoners of war. Prison doctors who refused to treat Haydee Torres, who was in horrible pain, would say to her, "We can tell that you have children. Where are your children? Are your sure your children are all right? Where are your children?" Haydee responded with uncompromising strength; as a result, she finally gained treatment and eventually she and Lucy Rodriguez, another POW, were transferred from the isolation unit at Alderson.

The U.S. government and its Justice (sic!) Department really are afraid of these women—not in and of themselves but because of what they are part of and what kind of example and leadership they can provide both inside and out. The U.S. government is trying to implement lessons it learned during the Civil Rights/Black Power and the anti-Vietnam war movements—to crush potential rebellion and leadership before it can fully take hold.

At Lexington, KY, this plan is being played out to the Nth degree. The Lexington Control Unit is a "state-of-the-art" isolation unit explicitly developed for "women political prisoners" (so prison officials were quoted as saying last October in local Lexington newspapers). The women are housed in a sub-basement with little natural light, completely separate from other prisoners. There is constant video surveillance of all activities as well as two guards on duty at all times. There are presently five women in a unit that will eventually hold 16.

Their mail is severely censored—particularly political literature. Articles about the struggle in South Africa/Azania are censored because they "promote the disruption of the institution." The *Guardian* was forbidden because it contained an article about gay people and anything about homosexuality "promotes the disruption of the institution." Newspaper articles from Puerto Rico about the actions against the U.S. military by clandestine organizations are banned because they "promote criminal behavior."

The women are allowed visits only from their immediate families and their lawyers. Grandchildren are not considered immediate family.

The five women who are in Lexington are Alejandrina Torres, Susan Rosenberg, Silvia Baraldini, Debra Brown, and Sylvia Brown. Alejandrina is a Puerto Rican prisoner of war, jailed for working to free her country. She is serving 35 years for seditious conspiracy (conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government). Silvia is an Italian national who has been imprisoned since 1982 for her commitment to revolution and, in particular, for her support of the Black/New Afrikan liberation move-

ment. She is serving 43 years on two different charges—conspiracy and grand jury resistance. Susan is a North American anti-imperialist jailed for her effort to build armed clandestine organizations among North Americans. She is serving 58 years for possession of weapons, explosives, and false identification.

Debra Brown, a death-row prisoner from Ohio, and Sylvia Brown, someone who escaped from Pleasanton Prison, have been put in the Control Unit to disguise its admitted purpose as a political prison as well as to attack their own humanity.

When Susan questioned the officials at Lexington about why she was there, she was told she could not know why. When she asked how she could get out, they said "by changing your political associations." In other words, Alejandrina, Silvia, and Susan would have to renounce all they have lived for in order to be treated in a humane way. (Amnesty International has begun an inquiry of the conditions at the Lexington Control Unit; they have described similar political prisons in West Germany and elsewhere as inhumane and contrary to basic human rights.)

Sexual threats are also common against women political prisoners. Laura Whitehorn, a North American political prisoner and lesbian, recently said, "The thing I'm most aware of is that they always hold over you the threat of physical attack—for women it's the threat of sexual attack. One male guard in New York insidiously said to me—"Wouldn't you rather be strip searched by me?" It's a way of telling you that you have no control over yourself."

When Alejandrina and Susan were being moved to Lexington from Tucson Federal Prison, they were forced to endure an internal search by male guards. This was done in spite of the fact that they demanded the right to have an x-ray and despite the fact that they had both been in federal custody for over two years. In addition, when Alejandrina was recently taken for a necessary and painful medical exam, she was given the choice of being kept in restraints or having a male guard present for the entire procedure.

While guards threaten prisoners with unwanted physical contact, they prevent them from exchanging affection with one another. Because of homophobia and because prisons understand that physical contact is a crucial part of remaining human, so even a good-night hug and kiss is regarded as suspect. After Alejandrina, Susan, and Silvia hugged and kissed goodnight in early May, Susan and Silvia were given incident reports (institutional infractions) for physical contact. When Silvia protested the unfairness of the incident report at a disciplinary hearing, one prison official told her, "You can spell 'fair' 3 ways—'F-A-I-R,' 'F-A-R-E,' and 'F-A-I-R-Y'." While denial of physical contact is common in all prisons, it takes on a qualitatively new meaning when applied in an isolation unit. To be part of building a collective response to these conditions, people can 1) write to the warden of Lexington (Warden Matthew, PO Box 2000, Lexington, KY 40512) and the Director of the Bureau of Prisons (Norman Carlson, 320 First Street Northwest, Washington DC) to demand the closure of the control unit; 2) write Alejandrina Torres (#92052-024), Silvia Baraldini (#05125-054), and Susan Rosenberg (#03684-016), PO Box 2000, Lexington, KY 40512, to show your support for their resistance; and 3) be in touch with the New Movement in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence and Socialism, PO Box 2512, Cadman Plaza Station, Brooklyn, NY 11202, to find out what else you can do.

Many times, during my imprisonment I drew strength from the words of other women political prisoners and prisoners of war. Carmen Valentin, a Puerto Rican POW, wrote in a poem called "Conspiracy":

While there is a breath left in me,
I will engage in conspiracy
While my spirit still can run
While my arm can raise a gun
Or my hand a pen still lift
I will be secret, subtle, swift . . .
As long as these American worms
Continue to dictate the terms . . .
There's no other remedy
But CONSPIRACY!

Speak to Me?

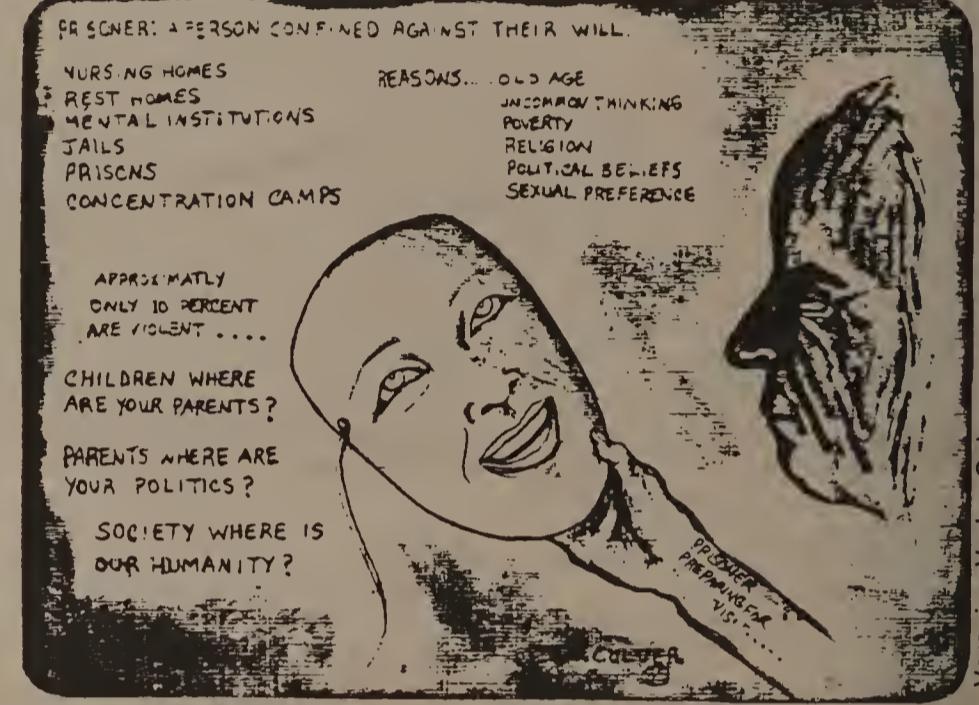
If I speak
when you have time
to hear me speak
Will you hear me ?
Or,
Will you remember
my face,
or the image of me
And mark the score
on your board
As one more
? inmate ? person ?
you talked down to
today

—Naomi Papale

Hey — Yo!

Hey — yo
in the uniform.
How do you think of
me?
Yeah, that's what
I thought
and . . .
That's why
to me
you
are a screw. . . .

—Naomi Papale



Editorial: "political" prisoners

TS: It was sort of interesting that our particular group didn't seem to want to focus very much on political prisoners. That might come from our feeling that the experience of political prisoners is somewhat different. It's white feminists I'm thinking of, who haven't thought very much about prison issues before they end up in prison doing civil disobedience. The women of color who are political prisoners, many have already thought about prison issues. But when we talked about how we would cover political prisoners, we thought about our own relationship to them, and whether we felt more at ease with political prisoners than with others, and it seems like it's almost the opposite for me. I feel kind of skeptical of political prisoners in a way.

MR: Well, one difference that comes up is that there's a certain privilege, a certain education and ability to defend themselves, ability to use the legal system, to make your own case. This is part of the reason I'm a little less interested in getting involved with political prisoners as an issue, because I feel like they already have a forum. They tend to be educated, to know how to use words, they're in a different ball park than the common prostitute.

AD: I feel the way you do if we're just referring to people who commit civil disobedience and go to prison as a result of that action, and by choice. But part of me is almost hesitant to say so because it implies drawing a clear line between "political prisoners," and all other prisoners. There are so many people who are in prison for political reasons and probably not by choice. The clearest examples of what I'm talking about are taking place in the south. No one would disagree that Ben Chavis was a political prisoner, but he was jailed for arson. Being an effective community organizer—particularly if you are Black—can result in your going to prison, and even if you've never broken the law. We keep noting the fact that people of color are overrepresented in U.S. prisoners, that

only people who are poor go to prison—the relationship between poverty and crime is political, and I think that we do believe that virtually everyone who is in prison is in prison for reasons that, in a broad sense, are political. And the prison net is widening—we could well end up in prison because of our politics, without ever having made such a choice, and the charges against us may not even be political.

MR: The reality is that we don't have to wait for that. . . . I dislike that argument that they're going to come for me next. It denies the fact they're getting us right now.

TS: I don't think that's really true. They don't have us yet, not physically. It makes me think of the incarceration of the Japanese during the war. I saw a movie once that showed how Chinese storeowners put signs on doors to their stores that said "Chinese here" so they wouldn't be taken away with the Japanese. If only everyone had said "We're all Japanese" maybe they wouldn't have taken anyone.

MR: If people could think that way, if everybody asked for a jury trial, and everyone said, "We're Japanese" it would gum up the system. . . .

TS: On the other hand, if all the Asians had said "We're Japanese," they probably would have taken them all.

MR: I don't think they could have. There are economic limitations. After the Calif. Briggs initiative which would have prohibited people suspected of being gay from being public school teachers, I read an article, "The Briggs Initiative Blues." It said that if it had passed it would have shut down the California school system. All the kids would have pointed out all the homosexuals, and they would have had to have trials. . . . economically the country can't afford to do the things that it says it's going to do. It can get away with it because there are only some marginal people that get picked up. It can't deal with a whole lot of people.

RELATIONSHIPS



hard times: she's out & i'm in

Dear GCN:

My story is different than most because my lover is on the streets. She has never been in trouble nor does she drink or do drugs. At times this causes problems because she doesn't understand how petty things in here can get me upset, but she does try to understand and is very comforting. She has never turned on me or thought less of me for the mistakes I've made. She sends flowers every now and then, she writes to me, accepts my collect phone calls no matter what. She's been my inspiration when I just wanted to give up.

Sometimes when I see other couples in here, I get a little envious because they can reach out and touch each other—all I have is pictures and daydreams.

I would like to hear from sisters who are involved in this type of relationship. Maybe we can add extra support for each other!

Sincerely,
Betty "Mandy" Curl
0301W
2605 State St.
Salem, OR 97310

i refuse to let distance destroy us

Dear GCN:

It has come to my attention that GCN would like some feedback on why more prisoners don't become friends or lovers with one another, and why they want outside pen pals. This is hard because I can't speak for everyone, but I can tell you what I see.

Women come in here and find it hard to deal with the time they have to do. They reach out for someone out of loneliness. I think a lot of them are confused about what they really feel, and the bonds they make here become meaningless once they get out.

I, myself, have seen many friends turn into my lovers, but once one of them goes home, it's over with. That's sad, because it is possible to be really close in here.

Me and my lover have been separated for seven months today, and I refuse to let the distance destroy what we have.

I feel very lucky to have Pam. This is a one-in-a-million. I know what we have is solid. I believe people look for outside pen pals because they want something solid, too, but they can't find it in here.

Wish us luck. To anyone who has found a serious person in here—hang onto them!

Sincerely,
Alicia Overstreet

be who you are

Dear GCN:

I would like to thank you again for placing me on your mailing list back in August of '86. Since that time I've been blessed with a few pen pals and the sincere feeling that I belong to something worthwhile.

These few lines are far from what I would like to do for all of you at GCN. If I weren't incarcerated, I would gladly be dropping in your office to stuff envelopes, fold, or label those beautiful newspapers! I guess you could say, "I love each and every one of you." So if there's any one of you feeling like you've been overlooked or taken for granted, let me tell you, you're wrong!! I share my paper with at least six to ten other sisters here on my unit, and they can hardly wait to read every issue.

My lover is on another unit, and she has been since November 5, 1986, but we still correspond. It's funny how our letters always seem to have something about GCN in them. We both enjoy reading and poetry, so of course we look forward to all the reviews you give on books, movies, and poetry.

I've been able to laugh, cry, and get an attitude with GCN. The attitude stems from not getting enough of your paper—by the time it gets through the Board of Correspondence for review, my issues are a month old—frown! However, old news beats no news—smile!

If I might, please allow me to share this with you. Ever since my lover has been transferred to her new unit, the officers don't bother me as much. I guess that they think I'm not active now because she's not here, but that's not true. I'm active all right when this pen gets in my hand!!

We're fixing to celebrate our second anniversary together and nothing, not these walls, not the distance, and especially not these people, can keep us apart. Because we both believe there's nothing wrong with us loving each other. What's wrong is being raised by our parents to love other humans (be they girl, boy, black, white, man, woman) and then being cast into prison and have these cold, callous police ridicule and condemn us for having the audacity to show another human we love them or care about them. To me that's what's wrong.

Well, I guess I've shared enough for now. I just hope other sisters and brothers will keep in mind their ultimate destination should always be to be with the one they love and their ultimate goal, to be who they are...

GCN, thanks for being my friend and family in a sense. Please keep the lines of communication up and open for people like me.

Lace, if you're reading this, I love you.
In strength and friendship,
Georgia A. Clouse
389386
Rt. 4, Box 800
Gatesville, TX 76528

Coming out: in the army and in prison

By De Larson

My experience as an ex-prisoner is closely connected with my identity as a strong, persevering woman and lesbian. Being locked up enabled me to discover my strengths and to admit and accept loving wimmin.

I spent eight months in the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women in St. Gabriel, Louisiana. When I got there I was involved with a man and trying desperately to be straight. I always knew I was a dyke, but could never bring myself to admit it. At the time I was busted, I had spent almost three years in the Army. The repressive atmosphere of the military would have made living as a lesbian almost impossible. Uncle Sam always had his watchful eyes open for any 'unnatural behavior.' This attitude scared me into self-denial.

I remember the first day I was allowed out in the prison yard. I was walking around with a woman who rolled in the same day as me. We had spent a few days in a room together, segregated from the rest of the population. The administration wanted to make sure that we didn't have any diseases, and also wanted to orient us. We were walking around the quadrangle and there were groups of women hanging out. I remember seeing two women with their arms around each other, sneaking kisses when the guards weren't looking. It was such a weird sight to me then. It was the first time I was exposed to women openly kissing each other. I've thought back on that from time to time and now it seems strange that a scene like that would even catch my attention. Now, I take for granted that that's how my friends and I are with each other.

It seems strange also that prison would be the impetus for my coming out; it certainly is a more repressive environment than the army. I think there are a number of reasons for this. I knew only a few lesbians in the army, none of whom were out. As I mentioned before, to be a lesbian in the military meant constantly living under the threat of discovery and hence, a dishonorable discharge in your records forever. In jail, there is the feeling, or there was for me, that I had nothing else to lose. After all, I already felt marked by my record. Though it wasn't until I left on parole that I came all the way out, I think being locked up forced me to start thinking about my sexuality. I also felt that if I could endure prison life, then I could deal with the world's impression of me as a lesbian.

There was a difference in the friendships I formed in jail: I had very few women friends in the army. It was primarily a male environment, and for the most part, the women I knew were straight (or so I thought at the time.) In jail, there was nothing but women, all around me, all the time. Everything about being in prison was intense, and relationships were no exception. Perhaps it was because my lesbian identity was just emerging. In many ways, relationships meant more than they did on the streets. And so, very soon after I rolled in, I fell in love, and I fell hard. I still remember how we met. I had only been at St. Gabriel a week. I was sitting by myself in my room when she came in, looking for my roommate. When she learned that Bobbi wasn't there, she asked me to come

down to her room for tea. We spent the next five hours just talking. We discovered that we shared a passion for books, photography, dogs and writing. In many ways, meeting Lisa was a lifeline. I had more in common with her than with anyone I was to meet there. We'd spend hours in her room just talking. In her I found the answer to my loneliness and alienation. I was from Massachusetts and had no friends to visit me. The one person I did have was my boyfriend. Though he wrote constantly and visited me faithfully, Lisa was there. All the feelings I had buried over the years, all my crushes, suddenly exploded to the surface. It was primarily a platonic relationship; Lisa was on lock-down for most of the eight months I stayed at St. Gabe. Still, loving men was never like this. But it took me a while to call myself a lesbian.

In the years since I've been out, five in all, I've thought about the women at St. Gabe who were able to call themselves lesbians. In prison, women who sleep with other women are not unusual, women who call themselves lesbians are. I knew five women who identified as lesbians, out of a population of about two hundred. These were the women whom I respected the most. They were proud and defiant. One of them had her walls plastered with write-ups for sex offenses. Two others were discovered making love in the church behind the altar. Although I might not make love in a church, I have that defiant spirit now, and I wish I could have been like that then. As the numbers of out lesbians suggest, the prison administration did not look favorably upon dykes. In a newspaper interview, our warden proudly declared that there were no drugs or lesbians in his prison.

It wasn't only lesbian sex that was frowned upon. Masturbation was not okay either. There were windows in the doors to our rooms and when we were in the rooms, we were required at all times to be within view. This is how one women I knew got written up for having sex with herself. This example underscores the totality of the control that the administration maintains over your life. Any form of escape is difficult.

Living in prison is a challenge, but even more so if you are a lesbian. But as bad as it is, it could be worse. I remember one time when a group of us were sitting around playing Spades, a card game which comprised much of our leisure time activities, and talking about how it felt being locked up. One woman succinctly described the experience when she said, "Well, who knows what would have happened to me if I were on the streets. Being locked up is better than being run over by a Mack truck."

I have some regrets. I wish I had been secure enough about my own identity to be able to talk about sexuality and about being a dyke. Some of those women had been out forever and I know that I could have learned more from them than I did. I wish I had told them how much I respected them.

Whatever happened to Lisa? Well, that relationship went the way of many prison romances, but I'll never forget what I learned from her and from being locked up, that I have the courage and strength to be who I am, without ANY regrets.

studbroads, turnouts, love & money

Dear GCN:

I am going to begin this by saying I am a 31-year old female who is currently incarcerated in the Texas Department of Correction for the second time, this time for a 5-year sentence. I am not gay, but I am not all-the-way straight, either.

The women who are truly gay from the "free world" are a real minority in here. But most of the women here do "fuck around" and are known as "penitentiary turn-outs." The majority of these will not be gay once they are back on the streets, and as a matter of fact, very few of them would even admit to "fucking around" in here!

To begin with, you have to become familiar with the "lingo" inside these fences. The butch female immediately becomes a "stud broad" or a "little boy." If you are looking for a relationship, you are "bulldaggin'." For many, relationships are a means of survival. Having been disowned by family and friends for criminal activity or sexual preference, they receive no financial assistance

from the "world." Consequently, in some cases, the one who can supply the most commissary (cigarettes, candy) will be the recipient of their affection!

Since I am not gay myself and can only empathize, it is hard for me to say what a true lesbian feels coming into this god-forsaken place. In order for a relationship to survive from here all the way to the "free world"—and that is such a long, hard way—there must be lots of love, trust, and patience on both parts. For this reason, very few make it that far. The ones that do make it have weathered obstacles that no relationship should ever have to weather.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Melvyn
425035 Riverside 5-C
1401 State School Rd
Gatesville, TX 76599

They don't like people to be happy here

By Tatiana Schreiber

Tatiana Schreiber interviewed lesbian prisoners at The Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville, Ohio, for a radio documentary about women behind bars. All the women interviewed were GCN subscribers who agreed to be interviewed after an exchange of letters about the project. These interviews took place over six months in 1985.

There's been a mistake. Although these interviews were scheduled weeks in advance and I received written confirmation from the Superintendent, the guard at the gate says he doesn't have clearance to let me in. I've just driven sixty miles across the flat winter white corn and soy fields of northern Ohio to this place—these old grey brick buildings set in the middle of open, empty land. It looks like a big farm, a college campus maybe . . . but driving along the highway towards Marysville there's this ten foot high chain link fence with angled, barb wire across the top. Just past the green sign that reads "Ohio Reformatory for Women" there are new buildings under construction. Yes, I've heard that the prison is overcrowded. Nearly 1,000 women live in this federal penitentiary built for 400.

At the gate there's a large sign warning visitors that they are subject to search. . . . There's a little white box-like house for the guard with his walkie-talkie. I've been waiting here almost an hour, parked near the gate, listening to the wind and the call of a few birds. Maybe I should just go home, back to my safe little apartment in pretty little Yellow Springs, back to my comfortable job at WYSO, the alternative radio station, where being a lesbian is almost cool. . . . Oh, here comes the guard. He says the interviews have been confirmed. I can drive on in as soon as I fill out this form . . . nature of my visit, driver's license number (will they find out my car is illegally registered out of state? I'd better take care of that right away if I'm gonna keep coming back here), name and number of inmate I'm going to visit. . . .

The giant gate swings open with a mechanical whir and I drive through into the prison yard. All I can think is thank god it's not me.

I'm inside now. All the forms have been filled out and the releases signed, and I'm being ushered down a long hall. Women, both Black and white, and all wearing similar dark clothing, are washing the floor or just standing around. They stare at me. I try to look them in the eye and smile but I'm about ready to turn and run. Why did I ever think these women would trust me? I can walk out anytime. And I think maybe I can even get them to like me? Who do I think I am?



Loneliness and Love

My first thought when I tried to imagine life in prison was that it would be horribly lonely. You've lost all your family, your place to live, your things, your pets, your friends, your job. Everything. So my first question to the women I met in Marysville was "How do you deal with loneliness?" Sharon is a big, white woman. I think she's in her late twenties. I'm talking to her together with Renee, a tall Black woman who was 23 when we met.

SHARON: There's two types of loneliness. You're never lonely here. There's a thousand women! You kind of wish for alone time . . . but, not being able to be alone with somebody that you love very, very much and you want to . . . you want to touch them, or hold them, or be with them . . . yeah, that's hard, 'cause you're not allowed to hold hands, you're not allowed to hug, you're not allowed to touch, you're not allowed to do anything in that respect at all, and I miss that. I miss that a lot.

RENEE: I don't get lonely very much. . . (she laughs a good, deep laugh. Renée is serious and thoughtful but she seems to have an ability to look at this place and laugh, like it's all happening to someone else and she's merely watching.) I'm pretty comfortable with me. I've been in institutions so long that . . . no, I don't get lonely. I find pretty much the comfort that I need within me.

Now, in being gay, and in being, you know, a rather highly affectionate individual, ah, (laughs softly) I find that to be a problem. . . . It becomes frustrating. I do express myself. They know I'm gay and I don't pull any punches with it. However, I do find it difficult. . . . Say, for instance, your lady is in another cottage. There are certain times you can meet, certain places, and you have to program yourself to be in the mood to talk, to be in the mood to be nice, from 7 to 9 in the evening, and you may feel that way at one in the afternoon, but there's nothing, absolutely nothing you can do about it except shoot her a scribe, "Baby, I'm feeling lonely," you know, and "I want to be with you" and all of this other kind of good stuff. . . . The frustration sometimes . . . it hurts.

Though relationships between lesbians in prison can be strong, they are necessarily limited by regulations prohibiting contact. Lights are often kept on all night long so prisoners can be watched; exercising in the dorms was disallowed in Marysville because a Corrections Officer (CO) thought it could be "seductive"; prisoners are not supposed to "expose" themselves to each other, and any kind of "closeness" is a crime.

Pamela is a young white woman who had been in prison about a year when we met. She said she was still amazed by the pettiness and irrationality of the rules governing relationships between prisoners. I'm speaking with her and Claudia, a white woman in her forties.

PAULA: How is anything going to work out in here? You have very little privacy. If you end up going into a bathroom for a few minutes with someone, if you're lucky enough to have a CO in the cottage who will look the other way, you still have to watch out for a Sergeant coming through one of the doors, or for an inmate running to the "police" saying "so and so" is in the bathroom with "so and so." Even having a platonic relationship, you're being watched. There's always somebody, a CO or an inmate, that's jealous of the relationship. They don't want anybody, but they're jealous because somebody's got somebody. They don't like to see people happy in here.

CLAUDIA: This system is supposed to be dehumanizing. That's the whole idea. It's to keep us from having relationships. We're supposed to be having a good time in here.

This life in here is not conducive to mental health. It's not conducive to emotional health. It's not conducive to relationships. You're lucky if you get out of here intact. That's it.

PAULA: They provide religious services here where they encourage you to practice "brotherly love" and show compassion for one another and then they punish you for it. The first ticket I ever got was because a friend of mine had somehow turned the iron up too hot on her own sweater, and it was an acrylic type thing, and it melted—the only thing she had was her wool state sweater which she'd washed and it was still wet. She borrowed my sweater. We both got a "lending and borrowing" ticket out of it, and "state clothes restriction," and then the CO tells me maybe I don't know the difference between compassion and passion.

They throw you together in cramped quarters and then they expect you to get along, and when you do, they're suspicious of your getting along. (laughter) I think it's just a vicious circle because everything in here seems to be a vicious circle.

CLAUDIA: This life in here is not conducive to mental health. It's not conducive to emotional health. It's not conducive to relationships. You're lucky if you get out of here intact. That's it.

With all the noise, confusion, and frustration of being locked up, it seems like it would take all your resources just to stay sane. How could anyone have room left over to care for anyone else, whether as lover or friend? And yet, friendships do develop in spite of all the efforts made to keep women apart. Renée was sixteen when she came here, the youngest prisoner at this place they call "the farm." She says she's learned that there's another side to being alone . . . that being here has opened her up to herself in ways that have made some of her relationships exceptionally close.

RENEE: At home I've noticed that you have a wall from what's inside of you, what's really inside of you, deep down. Being here makes you vulnerable. It kind of strips that wall away, involuntarily sometimes, and to a person that's sensitive it adds to a relationship, in that you can sit down and talk and try to help each other out, try to give each other a little strength, talking about it, finding new ways to handle this place.

SHARON: I think being able to share those moments of frustration with somebody helps the relationship. Also, you do come from different backgrounds. You get to share that. You get to bring two different lives together under the same circumstances. Maybe this person from this background would handle it this way, maybe there's a new way evolved from the sharing that's better, maybe not, maybe one side shows the other a better way.

But Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?

All the women I talked with were gay before they came to Marysville. These "real" lesbians are as much a minority inside as outside, and they told me that it's often hard to trust prison "turn-outs"—women who say they're gay inside, for one reason or another, but maintain relationships with boyfriends while in prison and will go back to being straight when they get out.

RENEE: It's hard trusting people because there's so many people who just do it for the hell of it . . . do it to pass the time, do it to get what they can out of it . . . the commissary (i.e. to get money to buy commissary items) or for sexual reasons, and they use love like it's saying "hi." They just see somebody and it's "Hey, I love you!" and to me, that's real deep. You can't meet me one day and the next day you're telling me you love me and fifteen minutes after that you're in love with me, and you want to spend the rest of your life with me. I can't get into that.

SHARON: You just don't know. Maybe I like a woman that's going to leave here tomorrow, and I really love this woman,

Despite the obvious pain of these situations, Claudia and Paula and Sharon and Renée seemed ready to give everyone the benefit of the doubt . . . but they advise anyone new to prison to keep a low profile and "watch your associations."

CLAUDIA: It might look like use and abuse but it does not necessarily have to be true. It could be because you are so frustrated with not being able to let your feelings out and have some kind of sexual release, that you dropped someone, just because it was too hard.

RENEE: Granted, it should have taken all my belief away from women, away from being gay, but I believe in feeling what I feel for women, and in dreams, and trying, and faith. . . . It's gonna come, and I have to be patient, and I have to go through all these rough spots, I have to go through all this pain, cry sometimes in the middle of the night. I have to get in arguments with the women I'm affiliated with, and feel so much frustration and anger that it just messes up my mind. I have to go through all this because I know it's gonna come and it's gonna be all right. Eventually I'm gonna get what I'm after whether it's gonna be in here or out there.



Madness Network News

Some of Them Are Gay!

When you're a progressive sort of person and you feel some gut-level empathy for people who are locked up, it's hard to understand how anyone could end up as a prison guard. And yet, the lesbians I met told me that occasionally, only occasionally, the barriers of keeper and caged break down and relationships bordering on friendship develop. For the most part, though, the guards' role as enforcer of the rules, combined with homophobia, or internalized homophobia, or racism, make real human contact impossible. Instead, prisoners have to find a way to discover dignity within themselves and not let anything anyone says or does take it away.

RENEE: In this institution, some of the COs or guards that come up here, some of them are gay and in order to cover all that up they're harsher on the ones that are gay.

Male guards have a bad tendency to look at homosexual women as trying to take their place, and I try to let them know I didn't leave a man to be a man, and that's where I get my respect from.

SHARON: There's a few COs that understand [gays] because there's a few that are. But as a whole, no, I don't think they wish to understand it. It's like "I don't want to understand something that isn't me, that's not normal, that's not God's law." But, like Renée said, there's some staff members that, if you treat it with respect, if you don't flaunt it or play games with it, they treat you with respect. It depends on how you come off and how they want to come off, and then you have a few that simply are not going to accept that you look like a butch . . . they'll say you're trying to be a man and they're gonna ride you like a man.

RENEE: Any contact between staff and quote unquote inmate is dangerous. I think they hold that like a bible in here, and I think that's one of the main problems. They don't try to sit down and say "Well, hey, you're human and let's talk about it." They'll come out of [the role] long enough to play you into something, to play you into getting angry . . . but as far as saying "I care," no, it's nothing like that. But you know which ones care. They'll hold their position, but you can feel that they care.

SHARON: If there's ever any coming out of that role between staff and inmates it's dangerous for both parties. The first job I had here on this farm, my supervisor was a very sweet woman. I respected her and we got along. She came out of the staff role and she was more like a friend. Due to that it was turned around that I was having an affair with the woman, which I was not, and I was removed from the job. They had no proof, they couldn't write any tickets, but just because she had been friendly enough to say "hi" or something that wasn't staff-oriented, it's dangerous, and not many do come out of that role.

I can understand why. I wouldn't want to lose my job.

gonna check you with the intelligence, the class, that you can't even write me a ticket for it. I'm so tired of all that ticket junk. . . .

I look upon their ignorance and it makes me feel good. It makes me feel good when they belittle themselves so much that they got to make a statement about the color of my skin, or my sexual preference, because I know that I've got some real live respect within me, and it's cool, so let 'em have their problems, their hang-ups; it's all right.

I Want A Voice in That

The more I talked to Renée and Paula and Claudia and the other women in Marysville, the more strength I got, because I finally realized that maybe I was doing something important by helping them get their voices heard. And I gained strength too from knowing that prison hadn't broken these women yet. They were surviving, and they had a lot to teach me about how I can survive. . . . I made a connection. . . . I know it's a fragile one. Renée and Sharon talked about how this tenuous relationship between lesbians in prison and those outside could be improved.

I think we need more publicity about what it's like in here, that we are people, we are women, we are for the lesbian movement, we are for gay rights, lesbian rights, we want a part in that.

I met both Black and white women in Marysville, and I had the feeling the numbers were about half and half, with a few Latinas. I wondered if racism was worse inside than outside, and if guards used racism to keep women apart. The women were of different opinions on the subject. Clearly it is racism and poverty that has brought many women here, and once inside, the line between keeper and kept becomes, in some ways, the sharper division.

RENEE: The discrimination is within being here period. There's a white and Black thing, sure enough, but there's an inmate thing more. You got caught. You're here. You ain't shit whether you're white, Black, purple, green or whatever. There are a lot of prejudiced COs as far as color goes. Some of them are real snotty to you, but personally I don't have the time to deal with that. They have the keys! There's nothing I can do to change it so I don't let it get next to me.

SHARON: Maybe she's strong enough that she doesn't let it get next to her, but there's a lot of people who aren't and it creates a problem. One CO told a Black inmate that she had to clean the COs bathroom and the girl told the CO, "Slavery's over" and the CO said, "Oh no, for now, you're my slave, now go get over there and clean!" . . . Some of them do still believe in slavery.

They have a problem with white and Black relationships and they tend to come down on that a lot, more than white and white and Black and Black. They don't like any of it, but they get real upset over white and Black relationships. It depends on who the officers are, how prejudiced they are.

We have one officer on our cottage right now that is creating an extremely high tension between the inmates because of her bias. She's not coming out and saying it. She's not coming out and making the statement, but she is taking white inmates off and talking to them. She is doing things that people see and notice. I don't like being put in the position of being called a honky because of what staff members do. It creates problems between me and my friends.

RENEE: There's some COs that's working at this place right now that just have the attitude that, you know, you're nothing. The hell with you! Of course I'm something! Not only because I'm bigger than you are, and not only because I'm more educated than you are, but simply because I'm human. Now just because the color of my skin, you know, is a little darker than yours, don't mean that I'm made of dirt, and I will not expect for you to put a little water on me and make me into a mudpie! I won't have it, you know, from nobody. I'm just simply not going to have it.

Now the minute you step out of line and call yourself checking me because I'm Black, or checking me because I'm gay, then I'm gonna check you back, but I'm

RENEE: If we could possibly find a way to let more women know that we're not exactly underground, that we're not exactly monsters of some sort, that we're alive, well, learning, growing, feeling, and going through life, even in here. . . . If they could find a way to find that out more, I think we would have a little bit more support.

SHARON: I think another reason why lesbians on the street aren't as much into women in here as they could or should be is — how would you like to have a relationship with somebody you've never met in prison? How would you like to offer support to somebody that you don't know? I can write articles for the newspaper, and people respond, but they don't know me. They don't know if I'm telling the truth or if I'm a wacko case, so why would you want to risk the movement of lesbians for an unknown situation?

I think we need more publicity about what it's like in here, that we are people, we are women, we are for the lesbian movement, we are for gay rights, lesbian rights, we want a part in that. That's part of our world, our culture, our beliefs. We need to be informed from the outside and they need to be informed from the inside so it's a joint effort. Let them know what we are, who we are, who we represent, and we want to know what they're doing out there.

If they're doing something out there I don't agree with, as part of the lesbian movement, I want a voice in that, but they don't know me. If I stand up from in prison, that takes away from what I have to say. So get to know me as a person and what my beliefs are and we'll discuss it. Maybe I have an idea that will work, maybe you have an idea that will work. More publicity is needed, more representation.

In Miracles ??????

if I believed
in miracles
I would believe
you thought I made
a mistake.
you'd show me
another way
other,
than behavior modification
or
tranquilizing drugs
you'd inspire me
to believe in myself
as I review
the previous lines
I see the miracle
in RESISTING you
I believe in me
a play on words
or mind games.

—Naomi Papale

This article is excerpted from *Curtains Over the Bars*, an unpublished manuscript (© 1979, Karlene Faith) based on interviews with women at the California Institute for Women and women on parole between 1975 and 1979. The women who speak here reflect many of the thoughts and feelings in the correspondence we have with lesbians in prison today. —Eds.

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS. TITLE 15 (Crime Prevention and Corrections), Article 1. Section 3007 (Sexual Behavior): "Inmates may not participate in illegal sexual acts. Inmates are specifically excluded in laws which remove legal restraints from acts between consenting adults. Inmates must avoid deliberately placing themselves in situations and behaving in a manner which is designed to encourage illegal sexual acts."

The idea of prisons is to block every normal human need. The need for good food must be suppressed. The need for restful sleep must be allayed. The need for joyful work must be buried. The need for uncensored time with friends is denied, and the need for sexual comfort likewise. But it doesn't work. To be deprived of life's sensory experiences is not to lose interest in them. To the contrary.



STEPHANIE: Probably more than ninety percent of the women here get involved in homosexual relationships—actually making love with another woman—whether just to try it once or twice, or to be involved in an ongoing way. Some women never encountered homosexuality before they came to CIW. Others learned about it in juvenile hall or county jails. And some have been lesbians for lifetimes.

NORMA: (Norma tells the story of how she recognized she was a lesbian when still a teenager in the late fifties. Despite feeling all alone, she believed in herself, and was elated when she got a scholarship to go to nursing school. But in her senior year it was falsely rumored that she was having an affair with another nursing student.)

They called me in to the administrative office where all the staff in their white uniforms were crowding the room. The Program Director and her assistant, and the hospital administrator and myself were seated at a long mahogany table. There, in front of everybody, they dismissed me from the school because I was a lesbian. This was the first time in my life that I doubted who I was. I figured that anything that caused me that much pain must be wrong. So I married an old friend. I refused to let the preacher use the word "obey" in the ceremony, and the marriage was a flop from the get-go.

After the divorce I was in a bad way. I had no one to help me and no way to support myself. I felt a lot of emotional pain and didn't know where in the world I could fit in. After what happened in the hospital I couldn't get into another nursing program. I had a short affair with a woman and ended up in county jail for "crimes against

nature." I'd never been around any kind of jail, and I was scared to death. It was a small town, and the judge knew my poor but god-fearin' family. He released me because when the legal books spelled out what was a "crime against nature" they talked about men but didn't mention women. But when I tried to get a job nobody cared about that technicality. I finally started writing bad checks and ended up in Tutwiler prison in Alabama. As awful as the prison was in so many ways, my heart felt at home among this group of women. For once there wasn't anything queer about women loving women.

When I got out of prison I fell in love with a woman. Even though we had to write bad checks to survive, and had to travel constantly to keep one step ahead of the law, we had many wonderful years together. No one was ever more married than we were all those years. We were both convicted of forgery and sent to CIW where we were confronted with the prejudices of the staff here. The psychologist who interviewed me when I arrived asked me, "How long has homosexuality been a problem with you?" When I wouldn't respond, since I don't consider homosexuality to be the problem, he kept at me for three months. It became a kind of game with him. He wanted to know all about my sex life:

"When was the last time you had sex with a man?" and "What's it like to do it with a woman?" so he could record it all in his sex file. But I was determined not to talk about it with him. Since I looked "butch," when they gave me and my lover our work assignments they put me on the bulldozer outside and put her in the kitchen. . . .

When my lover was paroled before I was, she broke off our relationship and I'm not with anyone now. If a human heart can find love, serenity, happiness and peace in this life in any form, in any way, that heart deserves it, even if it doesn't last but one moment. Hopefully there will be happiness again for me, but if not I won't be lonely or bitter. Because I was there a long, long time. I'm one of the lucky ones. Any meaningful relationship I have will be with a woman. If I don't find that someone, somewhere I'll live alone. I'll be patient. I've found things happen better when I don't try to force them to happen.

JOANN: Women become much closer in here than they would on the street. Women like me who have been involved with men their entire life are thrown into this institution with all these beautiful women. . . well, of course prison breeds homosexuality. If you need something there's no man to call, so you get closer to women than you would on the street. In here a friendship can turn to love even though outside it would just be a good, strong friendship. And after you get love, sex is just another step. You don't have to say "C'mon, let's try it. . ." It just happens. I learned that I don't need men. A lot of women are with men because it's all they know. If I do find a man to be with when I get out it will be strictly by my own choice.

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HEALTH



Veronica Verlyn Culver

Prison health: "aspirin under your armpit"

By Stephanie Poggi

Most women prisoners don't die inside—and for those who had been living on the street, the food is better. But incarcerated women almost always suffer from chronically undiagnosed and untreated illnesses. They are particularly susceptible to health problems for the very reasons they are in prison in the first place—because their histories include poverty and heavy drug use. Like poor women in general, women coming into prison have lived with inadequate nutrition, the lack of physical safety and negligible health care.

Some of the illnesses common to women in prison are a result of incarceration itself. These include stress, emotional problems and vision impairment for women in isolation.

The few efforts that have been made to provide decent health care for women prisoners have come from community groups like the Women's Health and Learning Center in Massachusetts. The Center works to empower women to advocate for health care despite prison overcrowding and an understaffed and underfunded health unit.

According to Jo-Anna Rorie, a health educator with the Center, women prisoners across the U.S. must not only contend with the system's limited resources, but with the perception that they are "chronic complainers" without real illnesses. Ironically, a woman must be willing to "complain"—sometimes chronically—until she can convince a guard or health worker to listen. "A lot of the responsibility is on the woman," says Rorie.

In addition, the serious medical problems associated with IV drug use, including hepatitis, abscesses, tetanus and malaria, require intensive care that is unavailable in a non-hospital prison setting. Undiagnosed illnesses also pose a threat. For example, undetected strep throat can lead to loss of kidneys—a health hazard virtually eradicated outside prison systems.

Another problem is that prisons "routinely underprescribe for pain." According to Rorie, a woman in prison who has had a Caesarean will receive Motrin for pain, which is "as good as aspirin under your armpit." The common rationale for withholding painkillers is that women may abuse them.

Women are also often exposed to infectious diseases, including hepatitis, mononucleosis, influenza and tuberculosis, because incoming prisoners are frequently housed with the general population before they have received medical clearance. This poses an added danger to pregnant women as their fetuses may also become infected.

Women who seek abortions face a number of obstacles—chief among them in Massachusetts is the failure of Medicaid to cover the procedure for prisoners. Women are forced to find someone who can raise the money from community groups and private clinics, often delaying the procedure. As a result, dangerous and costly second-trimester abortions are more common in prison than on the outside.

Other issues include the lack of home remedies and alternatives to Western medicine and the impossibility of getting a second opinion about a health problem.

As most women serve four to six month sentences, usually for property or drug-related crimes, Rorie advises women to wait until they get out to take care of serious problems. Unfortunately, women serving long sentences do not have this option.

Women with disabilities also confront severe risks to their well-being. As Rorie says, "the system is not set up to accommodate handicapped people." Ramps and elevators are in short supply. Women with special dietary needs may not be taken care of.

Prisons' inattention to health needs not only means many women will suffer devastating harm down the road, but that they have a poor chance of staying out of prison when they are released. As Rorie notes, "Women in poor health are the least likely to succeed."

No right to health

By Veronica Verlyn Culver and Nina Jordan

Prison health care has improved little in the last decade. Prisoners as a minority population nationally have never held much social interest beyond the obvious. As a result, they have been a neglected people of our society. There are no real instruments of power available to them. Their entitlements as US citizens have been stripped away by virtue of their criminal behaviour. Due to their loss of rights and civil protection, their avenues of recourse for basic violations of their rights are by and large non-existent. The courts rarely recognize their complaints as valid, and due to the structure of prison security and secrecy, verifying complaints of rights violations is virtually impossible.

Complaints of ill health are logged in records that remain inaccessible to the prisoner should that prisoner attempt to provide documentation for court action. Furthermore, the uncontested diagnoses made by a prison's medical staff are used to allow false arguments in court.

Unfortunately, most prisoners have little knowledge of law and are inefficient in utilizing the legal channels which exist. This coupled with the courts' disinterest in prisoner litigation and a prison's ability to withhold vital information, creates an impossible situation for the prisoner. It is not an overstatement to say that prison staff work together to violate prisoners' rights, and then actively participate in covering up these violations. Disinterest in the well-being of prisoners is seen in the behavior of prison employees and the basic structure of the prison administration. All of this originates and depends upon the society that prisons serve.

A graphic picture of health care in Washington state prisons is illustrated with the following recent cases.

— An inmate of the Washington State Penitentiary (Walla Walla) requested care for an ingrown toenail which had become infected. Repeated efforts were made by the inmate to get antibiotics, to no avail. Several months later, the leg had to be amputated as gangrene spread.

— At the Washington State Women's Prison (Purdy), a victim of cervical scarring and inadequate, incompetent health care and diagnosis would very likely have lost her life over the Department of Correction's reluctance to pay for surgery, had it not been for the intervention of friends in the community. The cervical scarring prevented the release of menstrual flow, causing bloat, severe pain and infections. A very painful cervical scraping procedure was done to allow flow. The outside physician ordered surgery, stating this was the only option and the inmate was at extreme risk.

The institution denied surgery, claiming it was "elective." Two months later, the excruciating scraping procedure was repeated, and confused, concerned community

members began calling the physician and the institution. The physician reiterated that this was life-saving—not elective—surgery. The institution relented, granting permission for the surgery under threat of lawsuits from the community.

These are only two examples of what has become the norm in prison health care. Episodes such as the above occur with alarming regularity in Washington state prisons. The following quotes were provided by Purdy inmates on the condition their names were changed to protect them from possible repercussions.

Susanna, long term prisoner, 34 years old, a member of the medical community prior to her incarceration:

The clinic is moderately responsive to minor and routine medical problems such as headaches, infections and the like. But a woman faced with a major medical crisis, particularly of an acute nature (kidney stones, heart attacks, even cancer), is likely to be misdiagnosed and her complaints trivialized by treatment staff. In general, she will not receive appropriate and timely intervention. Additionally, there is an awesome and pervasive trend in this prison to under-medicate for pain. Ostensibly this occurs because of the high addiction potential of analgesics within a convict population. Yet these prescribing trends in my direct experience do not occur within the men's prisons in this state. This implies to me some pervasive and deeply held attitudes among health care employees at this facility toward women in general. It's almost as if the implicit assumption among treatment professionals here is, 'Oh well, women are meant to suffer.'

Valerie, long term prisoner, 60 years old. Now serving her 6th year. A business woman prior to incarceration:

First, they are incompetent. I don't believe they're full-fledged nurses, and if they are, they certainly don't act like it. I was having severe stomach pains and was ignored. My basic problem was extensive coughing, but the doctor said my stomach was the problem. I wrote many letters, one of which was to Mr. Trop, Medical Director of Health Care Services in Olympia [state capital], after I exhausted all the institutional request procedures. My only alternative was to seek independent treatment at my own expense by an outside specialist, (as granted by the 8th amendment [against "cruel and unusual punishment"] and institutional regulations). The response I received was evasive and not helpful. I haven't the funds, as I spent \$300 pursuing this. I believe the warden honors nothing but court rulings. The institutional regulations mean nothing to her until an actual court ruling demands a person be given outside medical care. Until that happens,

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doing life without

Dear GCN:

Being yourself and feeling. 'Feeling' in prison in the state of Arkansas is impossible with their mind games that inmates and officers play on one another. I JoAnn Benoit am "speaking out" against this prison on the mental anguish that it's given me during these 3½ years I have been here. As a lesbian they have put me through the ringer here. We have been threatened about telling our side of the story to the press, but we're already sitting here doing 'life without' [parole], so I feel I will never stop speaking out.

The only reason my wife and I are together today is because we are on a 'mental health' unit. We are not to be touching each other, they say, and if we don't obey their orders we will be separated forever. So we live with this fear over our heads; all the more since when officers don't like you they just lie about what they saw and there's really no appeal. Even other inmates, cooperating with the officers to get privileges, will lie and file reports because they are jealous of us.

... The whole medical department should be investigated here because they are denying all of us medical help especially the older people. They act like our opinions about how we feel are not valid, like we are not human beings. The law library says they cannot do this. They can't beat people or curse us out. They have to show us respect. But they do not do that.

Two years ago I had some lawsuits filed against this prison about these inhuman conditions and the word 'got out' among the officers and then their inmate cooperators, and they told me that it would be very dangerous if I kept the suit, and I got scared and backed down. I can't keep living in fear no more.

I have fear of them drugging me up and saying I am mentally disturbed because they have done that before. When I first came here they put me on Haldol and the only way I was able to get off it was by telling them I will contact my attorney. Only then did they take me off of the nut pill. They cannot force drugs on me. I have not shown any violence on anyone. I'm just married to a woman and they can't understand it. They hate gay people in this prison and this state.

If you walked into this prison, its appearance

looks real good, like we have it made, as far as looks go. But under the table, there is so much garbage. It needs to be closed down. But we are taught to smile no matter what happens. They teach us PMA, Positive Mental Attitude, at all times. If you cry or show any emotion they will call the Supervisor. They tell you to stop acting like a baby or you'll go to isolation. You must show only the feeling the system wants you to, to make them look good. All I want today is to be able to feel my own feelings and do my time and not live in fear like everyone else is doing (living in fear). I will not be treated as if I'm in a concentration camp. I'm a 43 year old lesbian and I will go through whatever I have to go through to get this stopped. I don't know the people I need to get a hold of at this time to take care of these problems. So all you women in the other prisons out there, if you have any feed back on any of this I could use your help. Let's all get going together and hold hands across the country. We are just asking to be treated like human beings.

Sincerely yours,
JoAnn Benoit
2590
8000 W 7th Ave
Pine Bluff, AR 71603

Corrosion

Corrosion of the mind and all it houses the dreams, the beliefs the inner sanctum with all remaining pieces of such just a tiny shell brittle and ready to snap at any moment making the pieces fewer and the rot over powering and irreparable.

—Tracy

WATER-OFF, NO CLOTHING, NO TOILET PAPER, NO MATTRESS.



Veronica Verlyn Culver

PSYCHOTROPIC SISTER... AD-SEG SERIES... Starts out door window for hours... A temporary transfer from prison mental ward... Held as a disciplinary measure.

Chemical control

By Kim Westheimer

The extent of forced drugging in prisons is largely undocumented. However, prisoner advocates agree women in prison are far more likely than men to be the targets of such "treatment." Women are still often perceived as unstable, irrational and weak. In addition, strategies used by officials to divide and conquer male prisoners—such as the instigation of physical fights—are less successful with women. In the absence of physical conflict, authorities use drugs on women who encourage independence or resistance among other prisoners.

Officials may be particularly prone to push psychotropic (mind-altering) drugs on lesbians. Homosexuality is still considered a "sickness" and sex in prison is a crime in itself.

Information about psychotropic drugs and their side effects have been made available largely by the mental patients rights movement. Mostly comprised of ex-mental patients, the movement argues that coercive drugging—like shock, psychosurgery, seclusion and behavior modification—take away human rights. They also point out that definitions of "sanity" are problematic. According to Judy Chamberlain of the Ruby Rogers Center in Cambridge, Mass.—a drop-in facility run by ex-mental patients—racism, sexism, classism and homophobia determine how society views "sanity." Chamberlain adds that survivors of psychiatric abuse are coming to self-definition as an oppressed group: "It's similar to what women, lesbians and gay men and Blacks have gone through."

Neuroleptics

The most powerful psychotropic drugs prescribed by psychiatrists are neuroleptics.

According to the psychiatrist Caligari, author of *Dr. Caligari's Psychiatric Drugs* and an advocate for the mental patients' movement, "Neuroleptic drugs are typically used to control people whom psychiatrists label schizophrenic, manic-depressive, or psychotic. Psychiatrists claim neuroleptics can suppress symptoms such as confusion, delusions, hallucinations, withdrawal, uncooperativeness, excitability, extreme anxiety, aggressiveness, and violence."

"These drugs were developed in the early 1950s as versions of the antihistamines. Their strong sedative effect made them useful for inducing artificial hibernation during surgery. Introduced to psychiatry in 1953, they quickly became the major control weapons in all psychiatric institutions, for the most part supplanting barbiturates, insulin shock, electroshock and lobotomy. The first neuroleptic chemical family was called phenothiazines, the first of which were Thorazine and Stelazine. An early proponent of the neuroleptics described Thorazine as 'a pharmacological substitute for lobotomy.'

Other neuroleptics include Compazine, Mellaril, Prolixin, Haldol, Maban and Navane.

Neuroleptics frequently result in the following non-muscular body reactions: drowsiness, lethargy, difficulty thinking, poor concentration, nightmares, dizziness, fainting (when first standing up), nasal congestion (stuffy nose), blurred vision, dry mouth, dry throat, a tendency to gag, excessive salivation, difficulty in urinating, menstrual problems, sexual problems, low blood pressure and weight gain. Rare effects include rashes, interrupted menstrual cycles, painful swelling of breasts, epileptic seizures, hepatitis with jaundice, serious eye

Gena's story

By Kim Westheimer

A Latina lesbian prisoner in Massachusetts has fought a four-year battle against officials who want to give her psychotropic (mind-altering) drugs.

Gena Spero was arrested in February of 1983—at the age of nineteen—for allegedly killing her lover. She had spent time in "mental institutions" throughout her adolescence. At the time of arrest she was at a private psychiatric facility in Boston.

Because Spero was judged to be mentally incompetent to stand trial, she was incarcerated in the state prison for women at Framingham without ever having been convicted of a crime.

Almost immediately upon entering prison, Spero was given psychotropic drugs. According to Spero, prison psychiatrists gave her the medication against her will. In letters written to *GCN* as early as 1984, Spero complained that she was "on drugs that I don't need to be on." In a letter dated November 20, 1984, Spero wrote that prison authorities felt, "If I'm on a lot of downs, then I won't complain about my prison lifestyle." In the same letter, Spero wrote, "I've added up the hours that I've been outside [in the prison yard] and I'm sad to say that I've only been out 21 hours in the past two years."

After being on the drugs for some time, Spero was declared competent to stand trial in September of 1983. But her attorney Stephen Colella delayed the trial by successfully arguing that she should not stand trial unless she was off the drugs, to allow the jury to see her as she was at the time of the alleged murder. Spero was consequently taken off drugs prior to the next competency hearing and was found incompetent.

Spero has asserted numerous times over the years that she feels more sane when she is not taking drugs, and said she feels like a "zombie" when she is taking drugs.

In October of 1986, Spero was transferred to Medfield State Hospital, a facility run by the Department of Mental Health. The move was the result of a suit against the state charging Spero had been abused in the Framingham prison.

Since being taken to Medfield, Spero has fought hard to avoid drugs. With the help of attorney Charles Barron she managed to refuse large doses of thorazine. She did, however, agree at one point to take a milder psychotropic drug as a compromise. She said that at 20 mg. this drug made her feel silly, and at 50 mg. it made her feel anxious and paranoid. Barron commented that he was disturbed Spero was confronted with drug therapy before any psychotherapy was offered. Spero is not taking any psychotropic drugs at present.

Spero has also had to confront homophobia at Medfield State. She says she was deemed homicidal by Medfield State officials because she gave several lesbian publications to another lesbian at the hospital. The publications included *Lesbian Inciter*, a lesbian political magazine and *Outrageous Women*, a lesbian s/m magazine. There have been no reports of Spero being violent at Medfield State.

* * *

Gena Spero could spend the rest of her life at Medfield or other state institutions. Massachusetts law allows the state to hold suspected "criminals" who are judged incompetent to stand trial for as long as the maximum sentence of the crime allegedly committed.

Gena Spero's psychiatric history and lesbianism were sensationalized by the straight media at the time of her arrest. The *Boston Herald* published a front page photo of Spero with a five-inch headline reading, "Coed Held in Kinky Sex Slaying." The lead to a story in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* read, "A nineteen-year-old city woman who has been hospitalized at several mental institutions today was arrested for the murder of her roommate..." The article included the names of mental institutions at which Spero had recently spent time.

—Kim Westheimer



Genia Spero

notes: "[We do] not . . . tell you about all the good things which these drugs are supposed to do for you. Don't worry, you will hear plenty about the benefits from your doctor and other mental health personnel . . . Our interest is two fold: to make sure you hear the other side of the story about psychiatric drugs—how they may be hazardous to your health; and to prevent you from becoming a victim and a statistic out of ignorance about the toxic and destructive effects of these drugs. We believe that if you are fully informed, this is less likely to happen and that lives can be saved through 'informed consent' and educational programs on drugs, even if this means that the psychiatric system may lose a few 'clients' and the drug companies a few profits along the way."

A booklet on psychotropic drugs produced by the Mental Patients Liberation Front

AIDS and women in prison

By Ann Bristow, Andrea Devine, and Denise McWilliams

*Isolated, beneath the walls
The whispers only I can hear.
My trembling hands, wanting, yearning
To reach out, but afraid...
Searching, wanting out,
Knowing time is almost here
To let someone into my shell
Of aloneness, helplessness.
But making sure they don't get
Too close, for it frightens me.*
J.J., 1977

This poem was written by a woman when she was in prison ten years ago. Loneliness and fear of reaching out to others are feelings that have always been at the heart of a woman's experience in prison. Ten years later, these words describing loneliness and isolation have taken on a new meaning—and express an even greater fear—because of AIDS.

On the streets—and even more so in the prisons—there's a lot of inaccurate information about AIDS going around. Some people are afraid of toilets, eating utensils, and all kinds of casual contact with people they live with. And some women, having internalized the media hype about AIDS being a "gay disease," are afraid that if they have had sexual contact with another woman, they're at great risk. But other people think that only gay men can get AIDS, so there's no need for them to be concerned about who they have sex with—or how. Some of these people also tell themselves that tomorrow there will still be enough time to worry about dealing with their drug habit. Considering the homophobia of our society and the role the media has played, the fears are understandable. And considering how terrifying the implications of the epidemic are, a certain level of denial is also understandable. But neither fear nor denial



will protect us from AIDS.

Prison administrators have tended to respond to the AIDS crisis by providing prisoners with no information, too little or misleading information, and, sometimes, alarmist policies that seem to be designed to produce hysteria. Policies vary a lot from state to state, ranging from mandatory AIDS education to no education whatsoever for anyone. But the consistent result has been that women in prison have gotten incomplete or inaccurate information about how to avoid getting AIDS, and that has led to fear when there is no need for fear as well as dangerous situations that are being ignored.

Although there are some medical and legal questions that can't be answered by anyone yet, there is certainly a lot of information that can help each person figure out the best solution for herself. Our hope is that this information will help women who are in prison protect themselves from the virus. We also hope the information will help all women, and especially women who are lesbians, overcome some of the fear of getting too close to one another.

What is AIDS?

"AIDS" stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, and it is thought to be caused by a virus called "HIV," which stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. For easier reading, we will call HIV the "AIDS virus." This virus sometimes infects the brain cells, but usually it attacks the immune system and damages the body's ability to fight infection, resulting in an increased susceptibility to tuberculosis and to some diseases which rarely make a healthy person ill, such as a kind of pneumonia and a rare form of cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma.

Presence of the AIDS virus is determined

by testing a person's blood for presence of the HIV antibody, which is a substance produced by the body in response to the AIDS virus. The antibody usually develops within two weeks to three months after exposure, but delays of up to 18 months seem to be possible. People who test positive for the presence of the HIV antibody might also be sick with AIDS, they might have no symptoms at all, or they might have what is called "ARC," which stands for AIDS Related Complex. The difference between AIDS and ARC is not very clear. Usually ARC means the specific symptoms are present in a less severe form, but there are people with ARC who have

tum than in the vagina because the rectum is dry, lacking the lubrication and the flexibility of the vagina. (The primary means of transmission of AIDS between gay men is considered to be anal intercourse, inserting the penis into the anus, causing semen to come into contact with the dry and easily torn walls of the rectum.) While the insertion of a hand or a fist could cause a tear, in the absence of semen, blood would have to come into contact with that tear—by means of an open cut on the hand that is inserted—in order to transmit the virus.

Another sexual activity to avoid is having oral sex with a menstruating partner, especially when there is any kind of sore in your mouth, which is fairly common to

projected by reusing dirty syringes and needles. *The only way to avoid AIDS through I.V. drug use is never to share a needle, syringe, piece of cotton, or cooker.*

An I.V. drug user has a responsibility to protect herself and others. And any woman who is an I.V. drug user needs to consider now, more seriously than ever, how to end her drug use. Drug users who contract AIDS live an average of three to six months after diagnosis, compared to white gay men, who live an average of 24 months. The difference in life expectancy has to do with three factors, and the first is the most crucial to understand.

Research has shown that some drugs, including alcohol, have a direct weakening af-

We hope this information will help all women in prison, and especially lesbians, overcome some of the fear of getting too close to one another.

There is no agreement about how many of those people who do test positive for the HIV antibody but who do not have symptoms of AIDS will eventually develop AIDS. The estimates range from 30% to 100%. The virus can remain dormant for up to seven, or even ten, years.

Is the AIDS virus contagious like a cold or flu virus?

AIDS is caused by a virus and a cold is caused by a virus, so it might be logical to think that you can catch AIDS in the ways you can catch a cold. *It's not true. AIDS is very hard to get.* A flu virus thrives in mucous membranes, but the AIDS virus must be introduced directly into your bloodstream by other blood—or by a man's cum—which is infected. So you will not catch AIDS from a toilet seat, a bathtub, a cup or a spoon that someone else has used, food that someone else has prepared, a telephone, sharing cosmetics, or a sneeze. You can't catch AIDS by working with people or by sharing living quarters, no matter how overcrowded the living conditions might be.

The overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions in the prisons are conditions that are obviously detrimental to anyone's health, but the only way they are related to AIDS is that living under such unhealthy conditions—and with such poor medical care—creates a generally poor state of health, so if you do get exposed to AIDS, you might be likely to get sick more quickly, as you would if you were exposed to any disease. We all deserve better living conditions, and we have to fight for them. A person who is sick with AIDS should not be in a prison because she will need a lot of care, but segregating a person who has tested positive for the HIV antibody doesn't make sense because others cannot get AIDS by simply living with her.

Can lesbian sex transmit AIDS?

Sexual contact between women in prison carries so many fears, including fear of betrayal, fear of disciplinary action, and now, in some parts of the country, the fear of contracting AIDS. For reasons we all know, prison officials will probably encourage this fear, or at least they won't be going out of their way to reassure us. But the truth is: *it is highly unlikely that AIDS will be transmitted from one woman to another by means of sexual contact.*

The AIDS virus is transmitted through blood or cum, which is also called semen. Sex between women doesn't involve semen; it generally doesn't involve blood. There is no evidence that the virus can be transmitted through saliva, and it is very unlikely that it can be transmitted through vaginal secretions because concentrations of the AIDS virus in vaginal secretions are as low as they are in saliva. But, theoretically, there are some limited and very specific ways by which it is conceivable AIDS could be transmitted sexually from one woman to another.

Because the virus would need to be introduced directly into the bloodstream in order to cause infection, one thing we need to avoid is small cuts or tears in the vagina or rectum coming into direct contact with a partner's menstrual blood or an open cut on her hand. Small tears in the surface lining of the vagina or rectum can occur during the insertion of any object, and such tears could be caused by fisting. It is, by the way, much easier to cause a tear in the rectum

have, especially considering the poor dental treatment most prison health services provide. If you have a gum infection—or if they've just pulled out your tooth!—that sore or wound could provide a means of direct contact between exposed blood vessels and your partner's menstrual blood. Some people have suggested protecting the mouth by using a barrier, namely, something called a "dental dam," which is a thin piece of latex that comes in different sizes and can be purchased at dental supply houses. But this type of material is probably not easily available, there hasn't been any research done regarding its effectiveness, and people who have tried to use it say it's awkward.

"Safer sex" with women is not as complicated as it sounds: the crucial point to remember is that *blood-to-bloodstream contact should be avoided.* It is very important to state again that sexual contact with another woman is relatively safe! In fact, there has been only one suspected case of transmission by means of lesbian sex documented so far, and those women did report vaginal bleeding during sex. Not only that, one of the women was an I.V. drug user, and it's not certain that the second woman didn't share her needle.

How can AIDS be transmitted from one woman to another?

The highest-risk activity between women for contracting AIDS is sharing needles. The majority of women who have been diagnosed with AIDS are I.V. drug users (or the sexual partners of I.V. drug users), and I.V. drug users are the fastest growing segment of people—male or female—with AIDS.

In some states, including New York, New Jersey, California, Texas, and Massachusetts, the percentage of women in the prisons who have a history of I.V. drug use is very high, even 90% or higher. And the fact that drug use continues within these prisons—contrary to the denials of prison authorities—makes it very likely that AIDS could take on epidemic proportions in women's prisons. Sharing a needle is the risk that no one can afford to take.

The AIDS virus is carried in infected blood (even the tiniest amount) that is left in the needle or syringe, and the virus is in-

fect on the immune system. In other words, if you are or have been a drug or alcohol user, you will be more susceptible to the AIDS virus if you are exposed to it.

The two other factors related to the difference in life expectancy between drug users and gay men are that drug users' general health tends to be much poorer and that drug users have less access to medical care. Medical research is resulting in discoveries that are prolonging life for people with AIDS, and we can't afford to take chances with aspects of our lives and our health that could mean the difference between making it or not making it until the next medical discovery.

[It might be easy to forget that ear and nose piercing and tattooing also require the use of needles. The same rule applies: never share a needle.]

We know all too well that drug use can result in poor health, severe economic strain, and family disruption. Now we know it can also result in AIDS, because probably no one who is addicted can be absolutely certain that having the knowledge of how AIDS is transmitted would always—in every instance—be enough to give us the strength to refuse a dirty needle.

What kind of sexual activity does transmit AIDS?

Having intercourse with a man without using a condom is a high-risk activity. The men who are most likely to be infected are men who have engaged in I.V. drug use, who have had any homosexual contacts in the past ten years, or who have had multiple sex partners. Women who have sex with men, especially with men who are I.V. drug users, are potentially at risk, and the risk is increased with multiple partners, but condoms can be very effective—if used properly—because they can keep semen out of the bloodstream.

The insertion of an object into the vagina or rectum can cause small tears in the surface of the lining. The insertion of a hand can be risky when there is an open cut on the hand because there could be direct blood-to-bloodstream contact. But the insertion of a penis is always highly risky because there will be direct contact with semen unless it is contained by a condom.

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AIDS support inside

The panic around AIDS hit Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for women relatively early—in the summer of 1985. By that summer several women did have AIDS, and, at the same time, other women who were seen visiting the nurse more frequently than usual were rumored to have AIDS and soon were ostracized. Many women were very afraid.

A group of women got together and wrote to the prison administration asking for three things: first, that educational programs with outside speakers be made available to women throughout the prison; second, that the administration formulate a clear policy about how women with AIDS would be treated; and third, that women be allowed to form a support committee to visit and

provide other forms of support to women who were sick with AIDS in the prison.

The administration responded with a policy, an educational program, and, most importantly, an openness to our proposal for a support committee.

Sadly, most of the nurses at Bedford Hills don't want to deal with women who have AIDS, so the direct care has largely been provided by other prisoners—either prisoner-nurses' aides or members of the support committee. It's good that the administration has allowed the support group to work in this way, but, on the other hand, it's too bad that they have tolerated the professional staff's reluctance to give the nursing care that is needed.

Condoms can keep semen out of the blood, but they must be constructed from a reliable material, and "latex" condoms are less likely to tear than those made from "natural" materials. They also must be used from start to finish, whether the penis enters the vagina or the rectum, and they cannot be used twice.

Blow jobs are risky because of the possibility of sores or tiny cuts in your mouth or on your gums, and it's not always easy to be aware of them. Although it's still risky, withdrawing before ejaculation, taking care to prevent semen or pre-cum from entering the mouth, is safer.

In some parts of the country, the media has been giving a lot of attention to stories about prostitutes with AIDS who are transmitting the virus. While some of the reporting makes clear that prostitutes know about safer sex practices and express a feeling of responsibility towards others—and the wives of "others"—the stories pretty much ignore the fact that the virus seems to be more easily transmitted from a man to a woman than from a woman to a man. It is more likely that prostitutes are potential victims rather than transmitters of AIDS. In other words, using condoms isn't just a way of protecting a livelihood, it's a way of protecting our own lives.

Should I be tested?

Unless you are pregnant or considering pregnancy, there is no reason to be tested for AIDS. And there are very good reasons not to be tested, especially if you are in prison or involved with the courts.

One reason not to be tested is that the result, especially a result obtained by the procedure usually administered to prisoners who do not have symptoms of AIDS, could well be inaccurate because the procedure is unreliable.

Another reason not to be tested is that the test result of a woman in the custody of a department of correction will not be kept confidential. In Massachusetts, for example, even though prisoners are theoretically guaranteed confidentiality, a department of correction spokeswoman has admitted that HIV test results are reported to prison administrators. Furthermore, any guard or other prison staff could easily gain access to these records.

In some institutions we have already seen the ostracism and even violent intimidation of persons rumored to have AIDS. A severe clamp-down on relationships—including more disciplinary actions for kissing, hugging, and sitting on others' beds—has already taken place in a number of women's prisons and will probably take place in others. This is a sign that prison officials believe—or at least want to convey—that lesbian relationships spread AIDS. So it is even likely that administrators will see it as their duty to "warn" the partners of women who have tested positive. In short, a positive test result is a set-up for becoming isolated from other women and for being closely watched and harassed by guards.

In some states, parole officials are considering early release for prisoners with AIDS. But it is very possible that such a policy is intended to be implemented for men but not for women, unless a woman is very ill with the disease. If anything, parole boards (even with the indirect help of prison officials) might be very hesitant to grant parole to a woman who has tested positive for AIDS, thinking that a woman who might be a prostitute (and who therefore poses a threat to "respectable, heterosexual" men) should be kept off the street for as long as possible.

It does involve some speculation to say, at this time, that for a woman, a positive test could mean delayed parole instead of early parole. But some of the speculation about parole boards is based on what has already been happening in some courtrooms. Traditionally, a judge might be more likely to let a woman off if she has a health problem. It's not true for a woman who claims to have AIDS. Some judges are saying that they "...can't condone releasing a prostitute to the street because she's a public health risk," and are then locking her up for as long as possible. A claim to have AIDS, or an HIV positive test, will not help any woman to get off.

A test result that says you're fine, that shows no HIV antibody presence, can be dangerous in its own way, too. It can create a false sense of security—false because it says nothing about the next needle or the next trick. Getting tested for AIDS, no matter how regularly, doesn't do a thing to keep anybody healthy.

But no matter whether an HIV result is positive or negative, exactly the same precautions have to be taken—not sharing needles if you use drugs and always using condoms if you have sex with men. A result

that shows the presence of the HIV antibody means you're responsible to protect others, but a result that shows no presence means you're still responsible to protect yourself, and in exactly the same ways.

If you decide to be tested, it would be highly preferable to wait, if it is at all possible, until you are out of prison and free to go to an "Alternate Test Site." While confidentiality cannot be absolutely guaranteed anywhere, your best bet is with one of the Alternate Test Sites, where individuals are identified by code numbers rather than names. These sites offer counseling at the first appointment about making the deci-

the outside, preferably at an Alternate Test Site. An important part of the testing is the counseling that should go along with it, and one of the crucial decisions a pregnant woman who tests positive will have to make is whether or not to have an abortion. Making the decision whether or not to terminate a pregnancy is already hard enough. But if a woman is in prison, depending on what state and what prison system she's in, she could face being denied an abortion, or, maybe more likely, she might run the risk of being pressured into having an abortion, even against her will.

A pregnant woman who tests HIV positive might find she needs to make the decision on her own—and while she is in prison—about whether or not to terminate her pregnancy. Although there is a lot that is not yet known about the transmission of AIDS from mothers to babies, what we do know is that some studies indicate that approximately one-third of the babies born to HIV-positive mothers are born with AIDS, one-third are born testing positive for the HIV antibody but without any symptoms, and one-third are born healthy and with negative test results. More recent studies are showing that up to one-half of the babies of HIV-positive mothers are being born healthy and with negative test results.

A closing note

We keep hearing about health care providers who refuse to work with people who have AIDS or prison guards who demand prisoners be tested and identified so those guards can "protect" themselves. The public has been informed that casual contact (which includes the kind of contact these jobs involve) does not place them at risk for AIDS, and yet, the fears persist. These fearful—and even hateful—reactions are symptoms of the disease called "homophobia," or the fear of homosexuality. If a woman is a lesbian, although she might not be infected by AIDS, she has certainly been affected by homophobia, especially if she is in prison.

The AIDS epidemic has had its most devastating impact on two of this country's most stigmatized groups—gay men and I.V. drug users. It has also had a disproportionate impact on women of color. Over 70% of the women with AIDS in this country are Black or Latina. Racism and homophobia are obviously two of the reasons why the federal government has not responded to this epidemic with sufficient funding for preventive education, research, and treatment. Considering the history of medical experimentation on women of color, it is critical that women in prison, their advocates, and the community as a whole make certain that neither HIV testing nor abortions take place in the prisons before a woman has received adequate information and counseling and has given her informed consent.

Education and information are the only real tools available to us to protect ourselves and to prevent the spread of



sion to be tested. If you decide to go ahead, they will draw blood and then make an appointment for you to return in about a month for the test result. To get information about how to locate one of these test sites in your area, if you don't have access to a local AIDS Hotline, call or write your state's Department of Public Health.

What if I'm pregnant?

There is only one exception to the advice against being tested for AIDS, and that is for women who are pregnant or considering pregnancy. *If a woman is pregnant and has engaged in any high-risk activity within the last ten years, she should be tested because a woman who is infected with the AIDS virus could pass it on to her child.*

The most important reason why a pregnant woman needs to know her HIV status is that if she tests positive, she will need to find a doctor who is specially trained in high-risk pregnancies to carefully monitor her pregnancy and to provide the special ongoing care both she and her baby will require.

But even if a woman is pregnant, if she is close to her release date, it would be much better to wait until she is free to be tested on

AIDS, and prisons could be useful places for preventive education programs to take place. Administrators should be reminded that, since women tend to be serving short sentences, frequent trainings could reach large numbers of women at a time when they are drug-free.

But even when administrators of women's prisons have agreed that education is necessary, they have tended to provide information that is not really useful, or that even intensifies the homophobia. They have provided materials that explain that AIDS is spread through sexual contact and I.V. drug use, but because these are contraband activities, they avoid being more specific. They won't say kissing is safe, because kissing is against the rules. They won't distribute condoms in prisons where there are women and men, because it would look as if they were condoning sexual contact. They won't caution against sharing needles, because they claim there are no needles in the prisons.

The tragedy of AIDS is being used to keep us alone and apart. Information can help us to stay healthy, but it can also help us to overcome fears and find in one another a source of strength. These are times when we need to come together—to fight for better health care, access to education, and community supports for women getting out. And these are times when we need to find strength—to take care of ourselves and our health, while we're inside and after we're out.

Ann Bristow is Program Director of the Women's Health and Learning Center. Andrea Devine is a Program Associate of the Criminal Justice Program of the American Friends Service Committee. Denise McWilliams is Director of the AIDS Law Project of Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders.

Right to health

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she won't allow it, and if you don't have the money to hire help, forget it. I'm still sick.

Thelma, short term prisoner. 27 years old. Construction laborer prior to incarceration. Mother.

The medical attention they give here is very inadequate. I suffered from abdominal pains due to a prior-diagnosed cyst on my right ovary. They took me to an outside hospital and took blood. The blood coagulated, so the test couldn't be done. They did not take me back for a retest. What should have been done was an ultrasound and another specific test as was the standard procedure I've had from outside doctors. Instead, they put me on Tylenol 3 and tetracycline for three days and forgot about me. I don't go up there and complain anymore even though I still have the same problem and the cyst could explode and kill me.

Cymbeline, long term prisoner. 35 years old, real estate broker prior to incarceration. Mother.

Health care personnel are unresponsive, minimizing complaints. They give the women in the prison a low credibility rating when it comes to health issues. Personally, after weeks of going through the red tape to see a real doctor, I was ordered out for emergency tests to be done immediately at the hospital. Four weeks later the testing still hasn't been done. There's nobody out there in the community to push for me, or even to inform the doctor. My own health has been deteriorating rapidly, and I feel this is a common problem. We're isolated and without communication, and nobody knows what's happening to us. Not even the most primitive society would allow this if they knew what was really happening.

At present, the Washington State Corrections facility for women is grossly understaffed. Funding for the prison's operations are at an all time low. There is a reluctance in the legislature to allocate the funds to create a safer and more humane environment capable of providing the services and practices mandated under law.

Aside from funding, public awareness and participation are vital. The ability of administration to effectively block exposure of the actual goings-on within a prison setting has created an atmosphere in which anything goes. The result is prisoners who live in terror.

Without awareness and communication between the public and inmates, there can be little hope of reversing this trend. Perhaps this supplement is part of a new social consciousness and responsibility for a group of people who have for too long been ignored.

It's your health

By Naomi Papale

In recent years, there have been many studies linking emotional and physical health to nutrition and exercise. Because we are incarcerated, stress factors are great while our choices in food and exercise are very limited, so for us it is all the more important to get some information about what affects our health and our feelings.

Vitamin B-12 has been found to be useful in alleviating stress and other emotional complications, while its deficiency has been linked to mental confusion. Some of us have abused drugs prior to our imprisonment, and, as a result of not eating well or getting the proper exercise, our bodies are depleted not only of Vitamin B-12 but of all the B vitamins and other nutrients required for B-12 to work. Vitamin B-12 is found only in foods of animal origin—meat and all dairy products. So eating meat, milk, cottage cheese, yogurt, eggs or cheese will assist us in gaining and retaining the level of B-12 we need.

Another nutritional element important for us is fiber. Dietary fiber is the indigestible remnant of plant cells and cell walls, which you can see in the skin of apples, the pulp of citrus fruits, and the stringy parts of celery. It is especially important for us to eat as many fruits and vegetables as possible—they all contain fiber—because our diets are probably heavy in highly processed and fatty foods. Fiber aids in digestion and counteracts some of the negative aspects of a typical prison diet.

Exercise, as we know, can produce a kind of temporary exhilaration, but a recent study showed that physical activity actually reduces depression. Groups of women in their early 20s participated in a 10-week exercise program, ranging from moderate levels of activity to very rigorous levels. At the end of the study, even the women who had participated in the more moderate exercise programs had experienced a reduction in depression, which they attributed to the camaraderie or "team spirit" the group had achieved, the opportunity for some distraction or "rest" from thinking about problems, and the satisfaction that comes from setting and attaining goals. The women who had participated in the vigorous exercise programs were significantly less depressed, and the study concluded that was due to the release of tension and frustration.

When we eat and exercise properly, we feel better physically and emotionally, and the burden of many stressful feelings we may have is alleviated.



Editorial: how different are we?

TS: It gets back to the same thing...people learning that prisoners are people "just like me." How do we communicate that. I was thinking about this in terms of prostitution....I didn't use to feel comfortable with the idea that prostitutes were just like me you know, that I could really identify with someone who chose that way to survive, so I just wonder if there are still things there that we have to get past. How do you get past these attitudes?

MR: How did that happen with you? Can you identify an experience, or a period in your life, that made you feel more comfortable, or identify more with prisoners as people like you?

TS: Well, part of it had to do with me meeting women at a different level, not on the level of "Why are you in prison and I'm not in prison?" but "Who are you, what was your mother like, what is your relationship with your mother like now that you're in prison?" I always give as an example the story of the woman I was visiting in prison who is real different from me: middle-aged, I was twenty-eight; she has kids, I don't have any; she's Black, I'm white. She was in prison for robbery. Not only that, but she was no longer interested in having her kids, she didn't want them anymore.

So there were a lot of reasons why you might not think I'd be able to relate to this woman, but then she talked about how she'd made friends in prison, her relationship with her family. I finally decided it was important for me to come out to her. Oh, and we were different religions — she's a Christian and I'm not. Anyway, when I told her, she said she knew it all along, figured it out right away. And she turned out to be gay also! I was shocked. I didn't recognize that in her because all these other barriers made it too hard, so maybe that's a place where I was able to say, "Well, we have something in common, and maybe you've been able to find other ways to survive that I haven't been able to," and I don't know how well I'm surviving, you know?

MR: Well, one of the kinds of connections that I feel, and that I'm surprised more people don't feel more often is, I feel close to craziness a lot of times. Not always, but a lot of times. Just like no sense of proportion, things that seem to me to be clearly in one part of my mind all of a sudden become very large. And I feel like in the current society economics gets to be taken to be sort of the bottom line, the measure of survival, of stability, security and all that, not the human fabric, the social fabric.... You'd better have a house, a savings account, or pension, or whatever, or you're going to be in trouble — especially for women. Even though I have a kind of stability that so far has kept me out of prison, I am unstable in other ways. That's one of the kinds of bonds I feel with these prisoners, that we're marginal people, we're at the edge of something, we're unstable, about to fall off — it might be economically, it might be emotionally....

TS: When I said "I'm not sure how well I'm surviving," I meant my emotional, my mental ability, to survive. And that's another connection. Most women in prison have been sexually abused at some point, also most men in prison, and so I talked to this one woman about her experience of sexual abuse, and she said that her brother had abused her when she was about ten, and she had grabbed a knife and threatened him and that he'd run away. I don't know how often she did this, but it was one way of protecting herself, and I just, I almost started crying when I heard it, because I wish I had been able to do that. I wish I had grabbed a knife and told my brother to back off, and maybe he would have run away. So when I said before that people have different means available to them...that ability to protect yourself, and to use force when you need to, that was something I didn't have available to me, for whatever reasons. So that was a place where my sense of "Well, I can't relate to people who are violent criminals," really broke down! I wish I had been able to use force to protect myself....

MR: Well, that's interesting, in the context that we're in right now, that women are raised not to think of themselves as strong, and the connection between strength and force and violence is very subtle. It's a term that comes out a lot, "strong woman." It's a term that people feel was not part of their upbringing, so that could be part of the consciousness raising around women understanding themselves, and violence. At the same time, consciousness needs to be gained from or thought around being strong and forceful, and distinguishing that from being violent, or understanding what violence can mean in relation to strength and forcefulness. That really needs to be thought about more.

DL: What's violence and what's taking care of yourself?

MR: Yeah, right, and that's an issue for women, self-defense. That's another thing we didn't really talk about a lot.

AD: I've been doing a lot of reading about this for the [Boston] bail fund for women who have killed their batterers. The interesting conclusion that people who have done studies seem to be reaching is that the *men* who got killed were that much worse than those who didn't. You know, the nature of the violence was more intense — for example, instead of alcoholics they were drug addicts. The differences seem to play out with the men as opposed to with the women. So I was just thinking about what you were talking about with the sexual abuse. It's probably partly true, but maybe if you had her brother, you *would* have chased him with a knife! We don't know that, of course, but maybe you're not even that much different from her....

MR: And the point of this, in a sense, is that it's part of the project of making people outside feel some sense of commonality with people inside. One of the ways of looking at people inside, a lot of them, is that they defended themselves in some way, economically, or whatever. There's a relationship to forcefulness, which we can call strength if we want to be euphemistic, or violence if we want to be detracting. These people defended themselves and people on the outside should be able to relate to that as a very complicated dimension of life which gets solved in a lot of different ways.... Sometimes in this way, sometimes in that way. It's just there's a certain police force in this country that focuses on the streets and on certain kinds of things. Some people get put in prison and some don't, but the difference between what people did to get where they are is sometimes part of solving the same problem, of defending themselves, of surviving.

AD: About defending yourself, at least with women, a lot of times, it's crimes that indicate dependency, like manipulation by a pimp. It really is being exploited as opposed to....

TS: One thing that's sort of scary is that a lot of the women I interviewed in prison said, "Hey, I know that most of us deserve to be here. Most women in here did commit their crimes. We don't want it to be wonderful. We know we're supposed to be punished." And then they'd go on to talk about how awful it was, but they seemed to need to qualify it by putting out that line that they've been taught that they're supposed to put out.

DL: You see yourself as having done something wrong, not that you were responding to a really fucked up situation, but that you did something wrong and you were being punished for that.

TS: Right. But how are people ever going to get out from prison unless you do learn that line?

DL: Well, you just, you don't have to believe it! When I went to the parole board I told them what they wanted to hear. I knew I wasn't supposed to say,

"Well, no, I don't think what I did was wrong."

TS: So you really have to learn how to say what they want to hear but believe something different. That's hard, I think.

DL: It's real hard, because you get told, I mean every day, when you get up and see those bars you're being told, "I was a bad girl." Its really hard to escape from that.

No curlers on the count line

Anyone who has had the misfortune of being in Catholic school, the military or prison, knows firsthand the experience of being subjected to often inane and outright stupid rules and regulations. These policies are apt to change overnight at the whim of the administration. All of these institutions would be quick to defend their policies as essential to maintaining discipline, but we who have been affected by them are not fooled. It's fucking with your head pure and simple.

Listed below for the reader's horror and outrage are some choice items sent to *GCN* in letters and from the Disciplinary Rules and Regulations from the Louisiana Correctional Institution for Women.

From letters:

- *No talking out of windows.
- *You can only attend school if your are doing big [long] time.
- *No dessert in the hole [isolation].
- *I visit per month.
- *I phone call per month.
- *If you drop your tray in the dining hall, you don't get another.
- *No curlers on the count line.

In the hole (solitary confinement):

- *Personal mail that is kept in the cell may not exceed 10 pages.
- *Female inmates must wear pajamas issued to them while sleeping. Male inmates must wear their underwear while sleeping
- *Shaving will be done on Mon., Wed., and Fri., not during exercise periods, and razor possession of no longer than 1/2 hr.
- *No radio privileges.
- *Showering at least 3 times per week unless precluded by security.
- *Follow all rules of this institution and instructions given to you by an employee of this facility.

*Failure to follow posted orders will result in disciplinary action.

From St. Gabriel:

BODY CONTACT: Body contact is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, indecent exposure, kissing, sitting on one another, laying on one another, hugging, and holding hands. Persons violating this policy will be written up under Rule No.20, Sex Offense, or No.21, Aggravated Sex Offense, as may be appropriate.

IDENTIFICATION: Residents shall wear only the approved identification card provided by the institution. Identification cards shall be worn on the upper left side immediately below the shoulder on outer wearing apparel only. Residents shall not tamper in any manner with the identification card. Residents shall not forge their own or any other resident identification card. Violators charged with forgery shall be written up under Rule No.22, Theft.

RESIDENT CONDUCT IN LIVING AREAS: Talking, shouting, singing between rooms/cells or across the halls is prohibited. Violators shall be written up under Rule No.6, Disorderly Conduct.

These are just some of the rules and regulations dreamed up by the administration to make life more difficult for prisoners. If you had the urge to laugh at the absurdity of some of them, remember, that's a privilege reserved for those in the free world. As silly and ridiculous as some of these policies seem, women and men in prison have a hard time finding them funny. For them it's no laughing matter.

On the other hand, women are often ingenious about getting around the rules. For example, because they were restricted from yelling across the wings to each other, women at St. Gabriel taught themselves sign language and would sit, often for hours, talking to their lovers across the huge windows which separated them. In spite of the pettiness of the rules, it's images like this that let me believe that even small acts of resistance make cracks in the walls.

—De Larson

Church & prison ... like a horse & carriage

When I rolled into the Louisiana Correctional Institution for Women at St. Gabriel, I soon learned that besides the administrative staff who were eager to rehabilitate me, there were another whole group of people eager to save my soul — ministers, deacons and church ladies, all of them clamoring to introduce me to Jesus.

Though I left an even bigger sinner than when I arrived (I acknowledged my lesbianism), I admit that there were times when I did attend church services and in doing so I discovered a totally different, and surely inadvertent role that the church and religion play in the lives of prisoners.

Whatever the motives of the church people, the fact is that they are among very few outsiders allowed inside the prison gates. They have a freer rein than other visitors are allowed. For many prisoners, they are the only contact with the free world.

At St. Gabriel, church services were the only activity that women on restriction could participate in. I remember my lover and I going to services because she was restricted to her room in another building and it was the only way we could see each other. We would sit there and use the bibles as a desk, writing and passing notes to each other.

Church was also a convenient excuse to get out of your work. I used to go to mass every Sunday morning. It was a brief respite

from the hot-as-hell bakery where I worked and it got me out of clean-up each week.

Of course there were women who had much more clever and creative uses for the church than I did. Until they were caught by the matron, two women found the altar a private spot to make love. She told them, "Oh no, y'all can't be doin' that in here!"

At Christmas the presence of the church folks was especially appreciated. Religion did provide some contact with the outside world to many women who had no one, no family and no friends. One afternoon, about a dozen church ladies came with "presents" for all the prisoners who wanted one. In each box was a towel, soap, comb, (of course a pocket-sized bible) and other little items which make life inside a little more tolerable. As far as I remember there were church services only for Christians and some small acknowledgement of the many Muslim women there.

I think for me anyway, and perhaps for other women too, the thing that was most important about having church services was that it was an escape. I'm not into organized religion at all, but it was a way to forget, even for an hour, where I was, and to become a regular person again. When you're locked up, it's very important to escape for a while and become just like anyone else.

—De Larson

Some lesbian prisoners won't see this

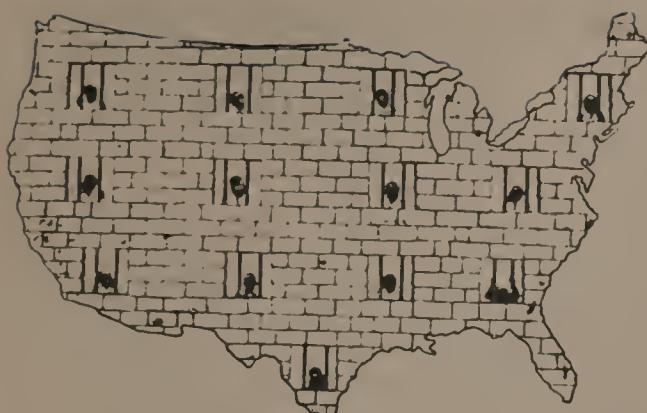
Prison censorship of lesbian and gay publications is common. Officials can keep us out with formal policies claiming our papers "threaten security" or "encourage unlawful behavior." They can also keep us out through mailroom fuck-ups — by just throwing away what they don't like.

GCN is always fighting censors in one prison or another, and you can be sure many lesbian prisoners won't be allowed to read this. In fact, contacting prisoners about contributions to this supplement was made difficult because many of our letters were turned away as "in violation

of rules."

Ironically, this censorship can make us feel the importance of our efforts to reach inside. The prison officials know how powerful our communication back and forth can be. They see what a difference we would make if we got our paper in all the time, answered letters from prisoners, went to visit, etc. The prison administrators put lesbian/gay materials in the same category as contraband — weapons or drugs. We have more power than we think.

—Stephanie Poggi



PRISONER SUPPORT

Southern Coalition on Prisons and Jails
PO Box 120044
Nashville, TN 37212

615-383-9610

The Southern Coalition has offices in 8 southern states: Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

The Sentencing Project
1156 15th St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
202-463-8348

The Sentencing Project is a resource for information on alternatives to incarceration, particularly defense-based alternatives.

CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants)
11 15th St., N.W., Suite #6
Washington, DC 20002
202-543-8399

CURE's work focuses on legislative analysis on prison issues in addition to working with the families and friends of prisoners.

The National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union
1616 P Street, N.W., Third Floor
Washington, DC 20036

The National Prison Project handles litigation on prison and jail conditions. They are *NOT* a resource for handling individual convictions or problems unless related to conditions of confinement. Your local ACLU affiliate is a good place to begin regarding individual problems.

American Friends Service Committee
AFSC has 6 regional criminal justice offices. Each is a good resource for information pertaining to the community, state, and region in which that office is located.

AFSC Regional Offices
AFSC Criminal Justice Program
405 14th Street, Suite 813
Oakland, CA 94612
415-836-2144

AFSC Criminal Justice Program
2161 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02140
617-661-6130

AFSC Community Relations Office
915 Salem Avenue
Dayton, OH 45406
513-278-4225

AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program
1414 Hill Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
313-761-8283

AFSC New Jersey Justice Program
40 Walnut Street, Third Floor
Newark, NJ 07102
201-643-3079

AFSC Community Mediation Center
Flushing Friends Meeting House
137-16 Northern Boulevard
Flushing, NY 11354
718-939-1300

Nat. Coalition Against Death Penalty
1419 "V" Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
202-797-7090

The National Gay-Lesbian Task Force
1517 U St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

The National Lawyers Guild
853 Broadway, #1705
New York, NY 10003

OTHER PRISONER RESOURCES

Reading Material

Prison Book Program
92 Green St.
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Left Bank Books
92 Pike St.
Seattle, WA 98101

Both of these programs send books to state and federal prisoners throughout the country at no charge. You may request reading material on a particular subject. Sometimes they are 2-3 months behind.

Duplications

Photoduplication Service

Library of Congress

Washington, DC 20540

Copies of manuscripts, prints, photographs, maps, etc. are available on request from the Photoduplication Service. (Copyrighted materials cannot be copied without special permission.) Fees vary according to the request. Write to the above address for order forms and price lists.

College Credit

CLEP

CN 6600

Princeton, NJ 08541-6600

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) offers "equivalency" examinations in a range of subjects. If you feel you have acquired knowledge of a subject without the usual formal educational channels, you may take the college level examination, and with satisfactory test results, can obtain college credit. CLEP makes these examinations available to prisoners. Write to the above address for a catalogue of the test subjects offered and for information about making the necessary arrangements.

The Prison Reading Project

c/o Paz Press

Box 3146

Fayetteville, AR 72702

This project makes books available to incarcerated women. Write with request for information. (The project's coordinator, Juana Maria Paz, has written a guide for prison writers who need encouragement to write called "Self-Interview Questions for Prison Writers." This guide is available free to prisoners.)

Penpals for lesbian/gay prisoners

Gay Community News

62 Berkeley St.

Boston, MA 02116

Lesbian and gay prisoners may request penpals, for free, in GCN's weekly listings.

Parole Information

Contact Center, Inc.

P.O. Box 81826

Lincoln, NE 68501

This national information and referral service for prisoners attempts to link people with resources in the community that can be of help upon release, such as drug or alcohol programs, employment, housing, counseling and other services. A few months before your parole hearing or expected release date, write to the above address for a request form. On this form you will identify the state you will be paroled to and the referrals you require. You will be required to pay \$5 when you send back your form.

Decriminalization of Prostitution, etc.

National Task Force on Prostitution

Box 26354

San Francisco, CA 94126

Decriminalization of prostitution, organizing, education.

PASSION Inc. (Professional Association Seeking Sexual Identification of Nature, Inc.)

Box 30453

New Orleans, LA 70190

Decriminalization of all adult sexual behavior, counseling, job, legal, social.

Violence Against Lesbians & Gay Men

NGLTF Anti-Violence Project

1517 U St., N.W.

Washington, DC 20009

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is putting together a file of incidents of violence against lesbians and gay men. Please let them know of the mistreatment of prisoners, even though they are not a legal referral agency and will not be able to help you defend yourself.

Resources



SUBSCRIPTIONS

New/News Analysis

Free to All Prisoners (except as noted)

Gay Community News (free to gay & lesbian prisoners)

62 Berkeley St.

Boston, MA 02116

The Guardian (Free single issue only)

33 W. 17 St.

New York, NY 10011

Off Our Backs (Free to women in prison)

2423 18 St. N.W.

Washington, DC 20009

The People's Daily World

235 W. 23 St.

New York, NY 10011

Radical America

One Summer St.

Somerville, MA 02143

Sofjourner (Free to women in prison)

143 Albany St.

Cambridge, MA 02139

WREE-Review of Women (Free to women)

Women for Racial and Economic Equality

130 E. 16 St.

New York, NY 10003

Women's Journals of Stories/Poems/Essays

Free to Women in Prison

Common Lives

(Common Lives/Lesbian Lives)

P.O. Box 1553

Iowa City, IA 52244

Connexions:

An International Women's Quarterly

4228 Telegraph Ave.

Oakland, CA 94609

Heresies

280 Broadway, Rm 412

New York, NY 10007

Hurricane Alice

207 Church St. S.E.

Minneapolis, MN 55455

Les/Con

(Lesbian Contradiction)

584 Castro St., Suite 263

San Francisco, CA 94114

New Directions for Women

108 W. Palisade Ave.

Englewood, NJ 07631

Sinister Wisdom

P.O. Box 3252

Berkeley, CA 94703

National Criminal Justice Publications

Free to All Prisoners (except where noted)

Fortune News

39 W. 19 St.

New York, NY 10011

Jericho (Back issues available)

(Nat. Moratorium on new Prison

78 Beacon St.

Boston, MA 02108

Outlook on Justice

American Friends Service Committee

2161 Mass. Ave.

Cambridge, MA 02140

Prison Network News

National Lawyers Guild

853 Broadway, #1705

New York, NY 10003

The National Prison Project Journal (Reduced

sub rate to all prisoners: \$2/yr)

American Civil Liberties Union

1616 P St. N.W., Suite 340

Washington, DC 20036

Reality Now:

Anarchist news journal covering prison, Native, animal rights, and other issues.

Box 6213 Stn A

Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P7

Kick It Over: Anti-authoritarian magazine with a feminist/ecological perspective

Box 5811 Stn A

Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P2

I am a transsexual and would like to keep up with our world outside these walls, so please send me your paper. I've heard so much about it! I'm also interested in a penpal. Thank you! Michelle TURNER, 2-A, 40 S. Alabama St., Indianapolis IN 46204.

My name is 'Natalie' and I would like to correspond with real honest gay males or females. I am looking for a long friendship, one that will last for more than two or three letters. I'm not looking for money, just a friend. My interests are writing, reading poetry and any gay rights news. (GCN & I have just won a battle to keep the paper coming in to this joint!) Please write. Nathaniel BARNES, 136238 (1-S-T), 100 Warrior Lane, Bessemer AL 35023.

LEGAL INFORMATION

'SELF-HELP' RESOURCES

Prisoners' Self-Help Litigation Manual

Contains the basic information concerning the rights of prisoners, the remedies that can be obtained from a court, and all the information needed to bring lawsuits concerning prison conditions and practices, parole matters, detainees, and post-conviction proceedings. (\$14, to prisoners)

Oceana Publications

75 Main St.

Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

Jailhouse Lawyers Manual

The National Lawyers Guild will publish a new and up-to-date Jailhouse Lawyers Manual which will be available free in 1988. Get your name on

What's beautiful

Continued from page 7

It's the individual and collective responsibility of the "police" i.e. anyone who carries a set of keys on her/his belt, to decide when to punish a woman for engaging in "Physical Contact," the official signal that homosexuality might be just around the corner.

ROSANNA: Homosexuality is technically against all the rules, and oral sex will get you three years tacked onto your time. But any PC—physical contact—can be considered homosexual by the staff. I'd been close to the same partner for over a year before they busted us one day for being in a "compromising" position. We were sitting on the steps talking with our arms on each other's shoulders. If they'd been on the ball they could have caught us long ago in a real compromising situation. They're lazy about it, at least some of them some of the time. It's like they wait 'til they're in a bad mood, and then they start busting everybody. We touch each other all the time, all of us. It's nice. But it's an easy thing for them to catch somebody in a PC, and it's a handy threat for them always to be holding over our heads.

The Staff is instructed to write up a report each time a prison rule is broken by one or more prisoners. These "write-ups" are equivalent to a police arrest, and, depending on the seriousness of the "crime," may be either a misdemeanor or a felony. Physical Contact in prison is a felony action. If a woman is written up she will face a disciplinary hearing, where her punishment will be determined. There are many rules within a prison, and there are many prisoners. It is not possible for the harried staff to observe and write up every rule infraction. Arrests are made arbitrarily and erratically, not unlike arrests for traffic violations on the streets.

Staff may be fully aware that a woman is involved with someone in the prison and not do anything about it, but use the information for control. Or the staff may quietly stalk a suspect, waiting to catch her redhanded to ensure her severe punishment. A prisoner who feels eyes following her

DOWNTOWN
LaGrange Cafe 538 7037

I will be closing the Downtown Cafe from October 9 through October 12 to take and board my employees in Washington for the "March."

It is important that Gay business goes to Washington! See us with our T-shirts at the parade.

Daniel J. Holmes, owner

REAL PAPER AWARDS

J & S Automotive

BEST AUTO MECHANIC

It looks like a big commercial garage, but there are all these weird little things about it. Reggae music is blasting away, signs for political and union meetings are taped up, the mechanic might be a woman, and sometimes it's hard to find anyone in charge. J & S has been Boston's hippest garage for years and years, and for the last few years, it's also been the best. Even when they didn't know how to fix everything, they never cheated anybody or covered up. So over the years they kept learning new makes and new techniques, and now can repair about anything. Their specialty is still Dodge Darts and Plymouth Valiants, those classics of dependency. But they're ready for anything and did most of the work on the antique vehicles for the movie "The Brinks Job."

Reprinted from Real Paper, "Best of Boston," Fall 1980.

277 Northampton Street
267-0300

every movement is a more submissive prisoner. Prison is fraught with double-binds. It's hard to follow orders when the orders change from staff to staff and from day to day. If a woman strictly conforms to the rules against Physical Contact, she denies her need for intimate friendship, whether or not it includes sex, and every prisoner knows that even if she doesn't get involved sexually, she may be accused and punished for it nevertheless. Arbitrary and inconsistent enforcement of ambiguous policies arouse a woman's contempt for her jailers, and reinforce her loyalty to women who share her vulnerable status.

STEPHANIE: Either you throw caution to the wind and hope you don't get caught—you never know when the pig's gonna walk down the hall and make a surprise check—or you have a pinner. A pinner is somebody who sits out in the hall, and when the cop starts walking down the hall she whistles or gives some other high sign that tells you you have about 20 seconds to get up and be presentable. Which means you're never completely naked, you're never able to just relax in each other's arms, to get completely involved in making love. There is always the tension involved. But people manage in spite of it. Women are able to comfort each other emotionally and physically. To hold each other, to touch and be gentle and listen and care. To love each other. In a prison situation that is a very beautiful thing.

The trust and loyalty required of any friendship are severely tested by the complications involved in sustaining an intimate friendship in the prison setting.

STEPHANIE: They know who's with who. It's real obvious when there's a couple. So they use it against us. They threaten, "You do this or that, or we're going to mess with your old lady," and then they've got more control over you. They'll say, "You go along with this program or I'm going to move your girlfriend out of this unit." Or, if she doesn't already live in your unit, "You do what I want you to do in this situation and we'll get your old lady living in your unit." This is the kind of game that goes on all the time.

Women in prison seek closeness, intimacy and love with other women, relationships for which the word friendship is inadequate. Homosexual, butch, femme, studbroad, bull dagger, queer, dyke even

lesbian, lezzie—these are also inadequate words. And, depending on who's saying them, they can be dangerous.

The woman who truly dares to love other women is not simply reacting against negative experiences with men. She is affirming her own womanhood. She is opening up to herself. Empowered by her passion for freedom, she is implicitly, and often explicitly, challenging the authority of those who define and enforce codes for other people's behavior. It is from such individual courage that political movements are born and social change is possible.

Prison is not a hotbed of radical feminism, and familiar feminist rhetoric rarely comes up in prison conversation. Nevertheless, women in prison are acutely aware of sexism and the effects of male/female role conditioning.

STEPHANIE: To say that role-playing is weird or strange is wrong, because all those things are reflections of what's going on in society as a whole. Think of the roles that women are told to have, and the roles men have. It shouldn't shock anybody that women take on roles. What's beautiful in prison is that most women will break out of them.

SANDRA: My self-image was very low until four years ago when I came to prison. I've always felt self-conscious about my body, inadequate, and it distracted from my experience as a female. When I started menstruating I thought it was because I'd been masturbating, and that I'd done something wrong. And there was so much stress placed on having large breasts and a tiny waist. I had neither and I felt flawed and guilty, somehow to blame. If my self-image had been better I don't believe I would have kept on picking inferior men for partners. Since I've been here with women, I've been able to accept myself, and I've found freedom. I don't feel guilty anymore. I've been with the same woman all four years, and she has helped me to overcome a lot of my guilt about myself.

ROBERTA: I never really liked women until I came here, I guess because I didn't like myself. We have so much time together, to really know each other. It's really something to have friends who know everything about you, and still like you. Until I came here I was very ashamed of my body, but now I'm pretty damn proud of it. And I know now that there's nothing wrong with homosexuality. I'm a woman and now

I'm proud of it. And I like to be with a woman who is also proud of it. It's time we all started listening to our own souls, instead of to all the perverted rules other people make up for us.

At CIW there is a pervasive attempt to pressure women into conforming to modern standards of femininity, and to discourage habits or attitudes considered inappropriate to "ladylike" behavior. While the prisoners are breaking out of socially prescribed female roles, the people who keep them locked up are working hard to break their rebellious spirits.

ANGIE: I remember when Miss C. decided she was going to clean up the campus and have a dress code. She didn't want anybody to look like a homosexual. The woman I was going with was a very masculine looking woman who started wearing eyelashes and makeup and short skirts. . . . Some women look ridiculous when they try to look femme. My friend didn't hate men or anything. She just didn't know how to put on lipstick. They tried to take her to rack because she wouldn't shave her legs. Then they realized that a lot of the "femmes" didn't shave their legs either. If they were going to take her, they were going to have to take us too. We had to group on it and then they let up on us. Except for one "in-correctible" studbroad who they took off to a mental hospital.

GINO: Ten years ago I was thrown in jail three times for wearing "men's" clothes. Now I wear what I want and no one's bustin' me for it, and I attribute the change to women on the streets who have been fighting for women's rights, for lesbian rights. It was real hard when I first came out of prison, it's always real hard. But getting in touch with the women's movement has made a big difference to me, and I'm so happy it's come about. Job resources, health care, women's coffeehouses—there was never any place like that before. Now there's a whole community.

I used to have to sneak around to be a lesbian, and it was just like being in prison. Now I can be a lesbian and still deal with men at work, and it's great to be able to do that. Equal rights means that now I can get a job working with machinery, working with and beside men, and it's OK. I know we've got a long way to go, and whether you're a convict or a free sister, we've all got our work cut out for us. But the war's on, so fasten your seat belts.

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Is it a sin to call your neighbor "queer"?

I heard a speech recently concerning religion and homosexuality. The speech was that homosexuality is a sin and talking badly of your neighbors is a sin, and all sins are equal and if you are without sin, that's the first stone. The speech made a hell of a lot of sense in that a lot of people put down homosexuality because of religious reasons. I believe in God. I believe so strongly that I do pray, quite frequently. I think it's important for people to know that before you put me down for being gay. Think about how you live your life. You aren't without sin either, you know, and, as far as being in prison, I just got caught, you didn't. Time will come around if you point your finger too strongly.

— A lesbian prisoner in Ohio

Prisons: part of a larger problem

The focus on prisons is in some ways destructive and paralyzing. Because the way you're going to get people to respond to the race, class, gender aspect of the criminal justice business is to get people to feel like they're part of one another—but that's a big problem. That's not the problem of prisons. That's the problem of racism in general, so as soon as you start trying to focus on prisons and say how are we going

to solve these problems around prisons, immediately you're in the middle of this problem of race, and of class. And you're not going to solve the problem of prisons without dealing with these larger problems. It's mind-boggling! But it's also the beauty of prison work. You can learn a lot about the society you live in. It's very depressing, but also enlightening.

— Mike Riegle

Sitting in McDonalds

I was only in there eight months, but I remember when I got out I was sitting in McDonald's and I looked up real quick and I saw a Security Guard. He had the same kind of uniform almost that the Louisiana State Police used to wear, and I just flipped out. I just kind of froze, and I started shaking, and then I realized it was the security guard and I went, "You jerk!" So, what about people who are in for years and years and years?

— De Larson

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NO MORE CAGES

A Bi-monthly Women's Prison Newsletter



Until a year or so ago there were two excellent support groups for women in prison, each with its own newsletter that gave insiders and outsiders a forum for both social and political communication as well as for individual/personal relationships and support.

Now, both are gone. It's a sign of the times. "Criminal justice" (inspire of the obviously "political" Reagan/Meese Justice Dept.) is somehow not on the '80s agenda of important "political" issues.

These two losses are serious, for all of us, not just for women in prison. They allow the further isolation of members of our community to a place where the only "news" comes from the prison Public Relations office. All of us are "threatened" by our possible "disappearance" behind these walls of social indifference.

We offer here some of the insights from each of these groups' experience in hopes that some of you will be moved to be in touch and get activated, even in what seems to be a small way.

No More Cages

A Brooklyn-based group called Women Free Women In Prison published **No More Cages** until recently and offered the following concrete suggestions from their experience of things that need doing, specifically in prisoner support, as well as more generally in resisting the "legal" politics of our *criminal* (!) justice business.

WHAT WE CAN DO

As the pages of **No More Cages** testify, the prison system in this country is getting more and more repressive; caging more people, most of whom are poor and Third World, building more prisons, isolation units and control units, and using more mind control drugs. Prisoners are becoming more isolated than ever, being locked up in prisons within prisons, and transferred to institutions far away from their outside communities and families when they organize and protest. Censorship of mail seems to be on the increase. So many people on the outside are faced with day to day survival problems that it becomes easy for the state to isolate people inside, shut them up, keep communication with people outside to a minimum. And the less connection that exists between people inside and people outside, the more the prison system can get away with.

Now more than ever, it is crucial that people outside get involved in Prisoner Support Groups. Here are some things we can do:

Make contact with people inside. This is the first and most important step, since every action must be accountable to those it will directly affect. Get names of women or men inside through already existing support groups, publications, or service groups that go in. Find out if there are committees in the prison that meet with outside people to work on educational, family support, coming out (job/housing), and other issues. Write up a proposal for a class based on whatever skills we have to offer. Start a books for prisoners program. [Write Prison Book Program, 92 Green St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, for a how-to-do-it pamphlet.] Talk with prisoners; find out exactly what is going on. You'll be surprised.

Start prisoner support groups. Start a group that can maintain strong ties with people inside, organize protests and spread the word among people outside about what is going on in prisons.

Monitor the actions of the prison system. Organize protests against the construction of more jails and prisons, and prisons within prisons (behavior modification units, segregation units, etc.). Protest the indiscriminate transferring of prisoners.

Focus on specific issues at the prisons near you. Medical conditions, no legal access, behavior modification units, forced druggings, the hiring of Ku Klux Klan members as guards, lack of vocational training, etc.—and start specific campaigns. Involve professional people (doctors, lawyers, community leaders), people who have some clout and are willing to fight other people who have clout.

Start petition and letter-writing campaigns. Put pressure on people in positions of power. Don't underestimate the influence of letters on prison administrators, judges, congresspeople, the Bureau of Prisons, the Justice Department, religious organizations, professional organizations and individuals, bar associations, political groups, civil rights organizations, whoever we want to reach to protest something or to push people into getting involved.

Use the media, in all its forms, to reach people. Put pressure on the radical press to cover what is happening in the prisons and in the prison movement—particularly in the women's prisons since women in prison are forgotten much more often than men. Make contact with sympathetic members of the straight press and put pressure on them to cover prison issues. Make use of the films and videos that have been done by various political groups about the prison system, and make more films and videos if we can get access to the equipment and money. Publish the letters and articles of women and men inside and distribute them as widely as possible outside.

Support class action suits initiated by the prisoners. Go to court, start letter campaigns, work with the lawyers involved in the case, and publicize the case in the press.

Have forums in our communities. Talk about the "justice" system in this country, the function of the

Now more than ever . . .

prison system, who is locked up and why, what is happening in the prisons, and what happens to people after they get out.

Help children see their mothers. Find out what is happening to the children of women inside and help organize children's programs so that kids can see their mothers regularly. Enable the kids to meet each other so they won't feel so isolated in their situations. Fight in whatever way possible to stop the state from taking kids and putting them in foster homes.

Organize a bail fund. Organize a bail fund so people who are arrested and have no money can make bail. **Distribute literature.** Publish and distribute handbooks that explain what to expect if you are arrested, what your rights are and what options you have.

Housing for people coming out of prison. Organize free or cheap living spaces for people who are just coming out and have no money and no place to live. Find people who have information about job training, welfare, etc. and connect them with the house.

Get involved in legislative work. Do legislative work that is focused on improving conditions or stopping further repression—for example, work against the death penalty and the criminal code bills.

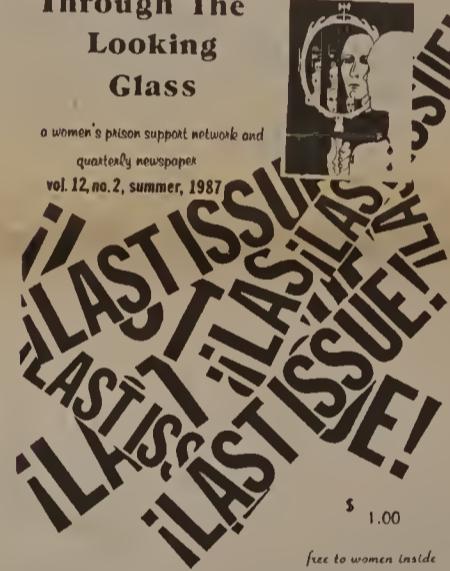
Go to court. Go to court for a few days in a row and watch what happens—who comes up before the bench, how the judge treats them, what kind of sentence they get, how high the bail goes. Encourage other people to go to court and watch "justice" in action.

Education. Educate ourselves and other people on the outside about the prison system; how it operates, how it is affected by changes in other parts of the state system, who runs it, who is employed by it, who is locked up in it and why.

Raise prison issues. Raise the issue of prisons in political movement and groups that wouldn't necessarily focus on the prison system, such as the women's movement. Make the connections. Raise issues of women's oppression and women in prison within movements and groups that do focus on the prison system, since they probably ignore women. Build strong links between the prison movement and the anti-psychiatry movement and generally raise issues of incarceration and state repression as they relate to every kind of institution. Expose the ties between the entire system of state incarceration and multi-national corporate profits, social control, racism and genocide.

Through The Looking Glass

a women's prison support network and quarterly newspaper
vol. 12, no. 2, summer, 1987



This last spring we received the following short piece from Seattle-based TTLG about their work with women in prisons.

Through the Looking Glass (TTLG) is a Seattle-based outside support group for women incarcerated in the correctional and psychiatric system. We are in our 13th year of existence. Our purpose is to provide a network with women across the U.S. and in other countries who are incarcerated; to let women know they are not forgotten, to provide them with both friendship and energy during their incarceration. We also hope that this networking sets up a stronger support system when women are released.

TTLG publishes a quarterly newspaper which consists mainly of writings and artwork from women inside. We also publish articles on prison reform, prisoners' rights, psychiatric abuse and incarceration, parole stories and national and international news. The newspaper is sometimes women's only communication with each other and with the outside world.

Another of TTLG's projects is the Jewish Sisterhood at Purdy Corrections Center, Washington state's only women's prison. Puget Sound Jewish women go to Purdy on the last Friday of each month to hold a Shabbat with Jewish women and their friends inside.

During the past year TTLG has started two new projects. One is a pen-pal column in the newspaper for women inside, to write to other women, either inside or out. The other is the Women Prisoners Support Committee, which advocates for women inside and gathers community support about the women's situations in the criminal justice system. They also maintain communication with Washington state legislators, and with officials of the Dept. of Corrections.

Through the Looking Glass networks closely with R.O.S.I., Remember Our Sisters Inside, which supports women in prison by producing their artwork.

TTLG is the only newspaper in the U.S. for women locked up in prisons and psychiatric institutions, since **No More Cages** stopped publishing. Women imprisoned are extremely isolated, and lesbians locked up are especially alone. TTLG has a strong lesbian focus—at this point the collective is all lesbians and many of the women from inside who write to us and for us are lesbians.

Women in prison are almost always poor, disproportionately Third World and usually locked up for economic crimes. Many are imprisoned for killing abusive men.

Women in psychiatric institutions ("mental hospitals") are locked up for acting out against their prescribed role of wife/mother; for being a lesbian; for being too angry; for being too depressed. They are almost invariably drugged, and often given electroshock. Women in prison are often given psychotropic drugs, also.

TTLG newspaper works to educate, inform and keep lines of communication open between inside and out. Right now, we are in danger of not being able to publish due to lack of money and burnout on the part of collective members. We survive mostly by fundraising through benefits, concessions at women's events, donations and an occasional grant. We desperately need more core group members, we need money. Please help us keep the newspaper going. Send money if you can, get a subscription to the paper (\$5 a yr./\$10 to also send a free sub to a woman inside). If you live in the Seattle area, get in touch to find out about more tangible things you can do! Our address is: P.O. Box 22061, Seattle, WA 98122.

Then, a few months later, we received the "last issue" of TTLG with the following editorial:

Dear TTLG Readers:

It is with sadness and regret that we tell you that we recently published the last issue of *Through the Looking Glass* (Summer 1987). For the last year, we have been going through a dropping off of women willing to work on the paper, until there were only two of us left. We held two community meetings, trying to recruit new members to TTLG, but could not get enough women to commit to carry on with the paper. Two or three of us is not enough to carry on with all the work involved in putting it out, which also includes fundraising, publicity, doing the mailing list, and innumerable other tasks.

The Women Prisoners Support Committee of TTLG will continue doing their advocacy work for women inside. Their address is the same as TTLG's: P.O. Box 22061, Seattle, WA 98122.

If anyone out there (in Seattle or anywhere else) is interested and able to carry on with the newspaper part of TTLG, please get in touch with us—we have supplies, resources and a mailing list of women inside and out who desperately need and want contact with other women, both inside and out. You can write to us at our p.o. box about that, or about anything else!

For all of you who have supported TTLG over the years with contributions of articles, poetry, graphics, letters, suggestions, all the many, many tasks of putting out a newspaper, and, of course, money, thank you very, very much.

Sincerely,
the members of TTLG

The supplies and resources include a large supply of layout/paste-up materials, a ton of graphics, a mailing list of 350 women in prison, and a lot of experience, which would be available to any group ready to start a new support group or publication.

*The prison system only expands and encompasses more of our lives and those of our sisters. As the editors of **No More Cages** wrote (above), now, more than ever, we need to get involved, reach in, learn from and support women inside.*

REMEMBER OUR SISTERS INSIDE

(ROSI)

On the brighter side, ROSI (Remember Our Sisters Inside) is still going strong and offers the following resources.

Remember Our Sisters Inside is a prisoners' art network, reproducing art from women behind bars as stationery, greeting cards, postcards and posters.

ROSI is attempting to elevate the creative spirit of the female prisoner-artist by lifting her artwork over prison walls into public visibility. Our purpose is to provide prisoners and former prisoners with an outlet for their creativity and provide the public with knowledge of convicts as productive human beings.

ROSI was conceived in prison at California Institution for Women (C.I.W.) and founded by former prisoners in the San Francisco Bay Area in June, 1984. National membership now includes artists and organizers in prisons in over a dozen states, as well as supporters and sponsors on the outside.

ROSI's publishing, distributing and communicating efforts are sustained by fund-raisers from such groups as *Through the Looking Glass* (a women prisoner's support newspaper and network [now defunct]) and membership donations from supporters (\$10-50 sliding scale) and sponsors (\$100).

Contributions are tax deductible, as ROSI is a non-profit national network, operating under the umbrella of the San Francisco Women's Building. Checks can be made payable to R.O.S.I./S.F. Women's Building.

We are now seeking new friends and financial backers who appreciate ROSI's unique potential. We are a "grass roots," prisoner-based, shoestring operation in need of your help. Won't you show confidence in convicts, become a member and help us advance this positive cause?

—Donate stamps so we can provide them to prisoners to send their artwork out, as well as communicate regularly with our growing network.

—Contribute paper, pens, pads, ink and other art supplies to send to indigent artists inside.

—Recommend supportive printers on the outside, willing to provide free printing, a service even more valuable than money.

—Donate \$50 to produce a basic brochure, including ROSI's purposes, accomplishments and goals, plus a collage of products and prices available to prisoners and the public.

—Donate \$100 to produce 1000 greeting cards, 500 posters or 3000 stationery sheets.

—Offer your group's mailing list for fund raising and publicity purposes, or include our material in your mailer.

—Open your cafe, cultural center or art gallery for prisoners' art exhibitions and fund raising benefits.

—Contribute time and energy as an outside member in the day-to-day work of the group.

If you can help in any of these ways, don't delay. Become a ROSI member today. Your help will allow us to increase the quality, quantity, and regularity of our printing. Our archives are overflowing with original prisoners' creations. We only need funding to publish and flourish. Because of prison life's negativity, what is needed is encouragement of creativity.'

To help ROSI grow and help prisoners help themselves, join us, uplift us and the rose will blossom.

REMEMBER OUR SISTERS INSIDE/ A Women Prisoners' Art Network, 2144 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704. (504-2077)



Wimmin's Prisoner Survival Network

We are a group of wimmin up here in Toronto who feel the extreme need and demand that a wimmin's prisoner support network be established. We are looking to help the already existing groups to be in touch with each other.

We are very much interested in establishing a newsletter. The first will be out this fall and will include the writings, artwork, poetry, etc. of wimmin prisoners. If you have any really groovy things you want to share, please drop us a copy. The newsletter itself will have contact lists of the support groups and wimmin prisoners who need correspondence and support.

If you would like to be a contact person on this list or if you can help out in any other way please write us and say hi, cause we'd really appreciate it!

In Solidarity,
The Wimmin's Prisoner Survival Network
c/o The Anarchist Black Cross
PO Box 6326 Station A
Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P7

[The first-class postage for Canada is the same (22 cents for 1 oz; 17 cents for each extra oz.) as for the U.S.]



Purdy/Through the Looking Glass

ROOMMATE WANTED

Prof LF 35 w/cats & one child seeks prof nonsmoker with or without child to share my Concord MA home. Avail Oct 1. Call Mary 369-6795 (eves). (8)

COMMUTE PTIME TO BOSTON?

Furn rm avail in beautiful Mission Hill apt 3-4 nights/wk for G or Bi M or F, 30+. Must love pets. No smoke/drugs/littlealc. Porch/w/d/cathedral ceiling. Walk to T. \$18/nt, incl util. 277-5835. (8)

2 White, 1 Black L/Bi f's seek L/Bi woman of color to share home 4 bedroom hse nr Davis Sq, Somerville. Semi collective warm indep. We have 2 cats, nonsmkr pref. \$275/mo incl heat. Avail Sept 15, 776-4693. (8)

2 LF seek 1 LF to share 3 bdrm apt in J.P. Walk to Pond & T. Must like animals. Avail now! Call 524-3925. Keep trying. (8)

LF 22 seeks LF or F, preferably feminist to share sunny 2 br apartment in Dorchester. 1 block from T, no smoking. \$325+. Call 265-2010. (7)

F seeks same to share Newton apt. Looking for mature, responsible, stable individual. Chem-free environment. Have 2 cats. No more pets please. \$325/mo plus 1/2 utilities. Call 244-6522. Leave message. (8)

PONDSIDE JP

Seeking 27+ BiF or LF for friendly, progressive, independent, 5-woman home. Great house, 2 porches, garden. Near T. pkgs. 1 dog, 1 cat; animal lovers but no more pets. No smokers; light alc/drug use only. \$240+. Avail 9/1. Min 1 yr commitment. 522-9760. 522-7446. (8)

SOMERVILLE SPACIOUS DUPLEX

GM 29 smkr seeks indep, resp, friendly M or F rmt to share very nice 2 br, 5 1/2 room apt on Red line. Big yard. \$275+ util. Avail inned. 628-7127, Tom. (8)

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DAVIS SQUARE

LF. BiF seek one not completely straight F to shr beaut apt. Big rms, hwd flrs, fireplace and very liveable. Avail 9/1. \$350 incl heat. 776-5585 (e); 423-0650 (d). (6)

F 24 seeks non-smoking LF roommate for lg beautiful Mission Hill apt. Quiet street, near T, bus. Must like dogs. Avail 9/1. \$210+. Please call after 8/18. (401) 751-6873. (7)

LF 35 & dog seeks resp LF for Teele Sq Som apt. 2BD 2Porches \$285 incl heat. 10 min walk to T. No more pets. Avail Sept 15 call 625-1039 lv msg. (7)

Arlington near Camb line \$266/mo LF sks 2 F roommates beautiful apt near public trans. 646-2746. I am 32 pref LFs over 26. (7)

THIS CAN BE YOURS...

Cozy Fenway apt. to share with ME — friendly, 23 y/o. F. \$290+. Avail 9/87. Call Julie (days) 725-3562. (7)

COMFY NATICK HOME TO SHARE

LF Couple & son seek mature, reasonable F. Near Train, Pike, rt 9. W/D 3dbr privacy. \$375 incl util. No smokers, pets or transients please. 655-8331. (8)

CAMBRIDGE/FRESH POND

LF 37 lok for F roommate to share sunny 2 br apt w/porch. Friendly, resp + neat. Nosmoking/pets, \$380+. Call 661-785. Leave message. (8)

2LFs 28 sk 3rd for lg 2 ft apt on quiet St nr Davis Sq T. We are friendly, indep, share food w/d, porch. Avail 9/1, \$270+. Sorry no pets/smoke. 776-8405. (8)

Student wants to live in starting in mid-Sept. White male 28 yrs old. Providence RI area only. Box 240. (7)

LF prof. seeks GM prof. to share 3 bdr renov condo in JP 1 block from Forest Hill T. 2 porches hwd floors. Sunny, must be neat, clean, responsible, friendly. \$400 includes all. 522-5569. (8)

2 LF sk 3rd for spacious sunny 3bdr Belmont. Nonsnk, clean prefer veg. share meals some friendly, 12 step welcome. Cat maybe. We're in 30's. \$280+ ut. 484-1553. (7)

2 LF seek 3rd for semi-coop apt. Cozy, political, with cat. \$200 incl heat. Call before 11:30 am after 5:30 pm. 491-1124. Near Central Square. (7)

BIG SUNNY VICTORIAN APT

LF sks LF/GM for apt in Jones Hill Dorch. Safe near T, shops, Idy etc. 2 porches, den, patio, cable, EIK. Avail ASAP \$295+. 282-2962 eves. (7)

2 recently moved W. coast L's seek roomies for 2 br apt in J.P. apt w/hrwd flrs. Near T. We are 24+, semi-vegi music/art lovers, responsible, neat. You: resp. GM/L w/a great sense of humor! Avail. 9/1 \$275 incl. all. Cat ok cigs negot. 522-6152 eves. (7)

TREES IN THE CITY

3 ez going, resp. LFs looking for 4th for our beautiful home in Dorch. 2 fls. (All hwd), bkyd, wld. Vege, co-op, laughs, politics. We have dog, pets ok, 5 min to T. \$200. 436-2752. (7)

2LFs seek 2 more for spacious 4 bdr in Medford Sq on Busline. We are fun, communicative, political, independent, spiritual, and are hoping to create semi-coop home. Please, no smoke or pets. Avail Sept 15. Call Barbara or Nancy at 623-5035 or B. at work 643-2442. Thanks! (10)

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GAY LISTINGS

354-7706

JLF seek JLF 25+ for independent, friendly, great apt. lo rent, nr Davis Sq, veggie/kosher. Pls call 623-8603. (7)

2 Rms avail in beaut. Rosl. hm with irreverent spiritual W 35. Sun, trees, birds, nr. Arb. Reas. rent avail 8/15. Cat OK, no cigs. Dovida, 327-3367. (7)

LARGE DORCHESTER HOME

1 LF + 1 GM seek 2 people to share 4 bdrm apt, WD, porch, parking, lg yard, DW + more. \$265+. Call 825-2722. (7)

GM 24 & LF 27 sk nonsmkr, veg. LF or GM 24+ w/sense of humor for beautiful Somerville apt. Sorry, no more cats. Avail 9/1. \$293+. 776-7909. (7)

HOUSING WANTED**LESBIAN NATUROPATHIC DR. AND DOG SEEK HOME IN N.H.**

Moving to Nashua area in September. Looking for home with other non-smoking women, fenced yard. Leave message for Devra at 617-395-1920. (8)

APARTMENTS

Small house in W. Mass for rent in fall. 30 min to Amherst/Gfld beautiful location for country-minded. \$300/mo not incl. Call 617-544-7938. (7)

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ORGANIZATIONS**GAY YOUTH COMMUNITY FUND**

Sponsors of youth/student projects send tax-deductible donations payable to: GYCF/Capp St. Foundation. Mail to: GYCF, 2215-R Market St., Suite 479, San Francisco, CA 94114. (30)

OLDER LESBIAN ENERGY

Social and support group for women over 40. P.O. Box 1214, East Arlington, MA 02174. (15.4)

DOB

Support organization for lesbians, 1151 Mass Ave, Camb. OCBC. Raps every Tues, Thurs at 8pm. Special raps for 35+, parents, ynger women, baby boomers, singles, coming out, issues forum. All 8pm. Monthly events, outing club, library. Info: 661-3633. All women invited to participate. (15.35)

BLACK AND WHITE MEN TOGETHER

Multiracial group for all people. Call (415) 431-1976 or write BWMT, suite 140, 580 Castro St. SF, CA, 94114. (V16.1)

BOSTON ALLIANCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH

Social support group for youth 22 and under. Wed. night general meeting from 7:30-9pm. New persons meeting at 6:30. Women's meeting at 6. Call 497-8282 for info. (32)

SHELIX

Northampton, MA lesbian s/m support group since 1983 mets monthly for topic discussions. Safe confidential environment. Lesbians at all levels of fantasy or practice welcome. Newcomers encouraged. Sase: Shelix, PO Box 416 Florence Station, Northampton, MA 01060. (7)

MAN/BOY LOVE

A support group for intergenerational relationships. For more information send \$1 to: NAMBLA-GCNAD at 537 Jones St. NO 8418, S.F. CA 94102 or PO Box 174, New York, New York 10018. (23)

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- ♪ \$10/month dues
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- ♪ Call 482-2527 to set up an audition

COME BE A PART OF THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON</h2

CALENDAR

August 23
to
September 6

23 sunday

Arlington — Am Tikva summer outing at Spy Pond. Meet at picnic tables next to swimming area. Bring dairy/veggie dishes to share. Noon. Info: 782-8894.

Boston — Women's friendship meeting to plan social activities. Info: 783-0204.

Boston — Gay/Lesbian Unitarian Universalists discuss the relationship between spirituality and political activism. Hunewell Chapel at the Arlington St. Church, 351 Boylston St. 6pm. Info: Jay Deacon, 742-2100, x256.



Freedom Trail Band, 29 saturday.

24 monday

Boston — Whitney Houston in concert on the Common. Benefit for the AIDS Action Committee. \$35, \$50 with VIP reception. Info: 266-6909.

25 tuesday

Boston — Civil Defense Task Force for the March on Washington. Northeastern Univ., 174 Ell Center. 7pm. Info: 354-8515.

Cambridge — Lesbians 25 and under. DOB, ...

26 wednesday

Boston — Community meeting for the National March on Washington. Piemonte Rm., Boston City Hall (Congress St. entrance). 7pm. Info: 426-5605.

27 thursday

Cambridge — Open discussion for lesbians. DOB ...

Boston — GCN's production night. All welcome. Proofreading: before 8PM. Paste-up: after 7PM. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington & Back Bay T-stops. GCN: 426-4469.



Law of Desire's transsexual Tina. See review.

28 friday

Provincetown — Diane Ponzio Trio at the Meeting House, 326 Commercial St. 9pm.

Boston — GCN mailing. Come help stuff the paper and meet new friends. 5pm to 10pm. Near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN, 426-4469.

29 saturday

Boston — Lesbian and Gay Freedom Trail Band concert. Parkman Bandstand, Boston Common. 11:30am.

Boston — Jewish Lesbian Daughters of Holocaust Survivors Group benefit houseparty. 2pm. Info: 321-4254.

Shrewsbury — Women's dance to benefit the Worcester committee for the March on Washington. 206 S. Quinsigamond Ave. 8pm. Info: 793-7287.

Hartford, CT — New England Regional Meeting for the March on Washington. Commercial Street Bar, Wethersfield Ave. Noon-4pm. Info: (617) 522-4368.

30 sunday

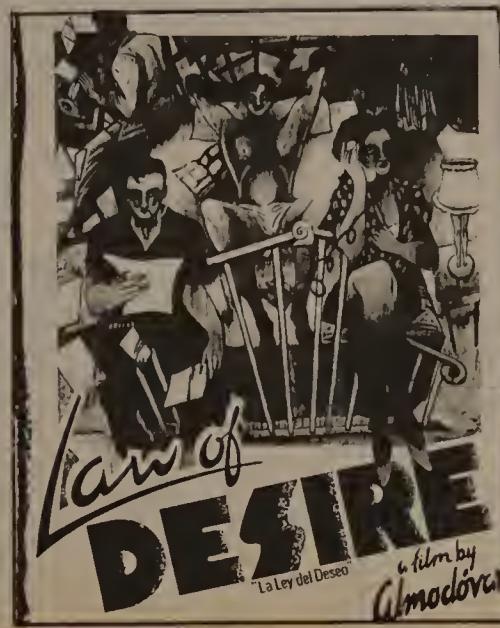
Boston — Rock Against Sexism wild and crazy disc party. The 1270. 6-10pm. \$2.

Mansfield, MA — Anne Murray performs at Great Woods. 7:30pm. Tickets \$13.50-\$19.50. Info: 787-8000.

Boston — Women's friendship meeting to plan social activities. Info: 783-0204.



Gender bending party, 30 sunday.



Cambridge — DOB women's softball. Magazine Field, Mem. Dr., Cambridge. All abilities welcome. Info: Steph, 357-5774.

Boston — Gender bending party at Somewhere Else to benefit the march on Washington. 295 Franklin St. 8pm. \$3.

Boston — Loccie Brown discusses the Moving Violations motorcycle club on "Boston's Other Voice." WROR, 98.5FM. 12:30-1am.

31 monday

Provincetown — Diane Ponzio Trio in concert at Different Ducks, 135 Bradford St. Tonight through Sept. 7. 9pm.

September 1 tuesday

Cambridge — DOB forum presents Diane Bellevance on "Public Relations for Small Businesses." DOB ...

4 friday

Greenwich, RI — New England Women's Musical Retreat. Through Sept. 7. W. Alton Jones Campus, University of Rhode Island. \$105-\$130 before Aug. 20, \$135 after. Info and tickets: NEWMR, P.O. Box 217, New Haven, CT 06513. (203) 523-1268.

6 sunday

Dorchester — Dorchester GALA monthly potluck. Info: Barbara, 282-2962, Joe, 282-7822 (after 6pm).

Cambridge — DOB women's softball. Magazine Field, Mem. Dr., Cambridge. All abilities welcome. Info: Steph, 357-5774.

Boston — "Boston's Other Voice" interviews Rudy Kikel of Bay Windows. WROR, 98.5FM. 12:30-1am.

The Boy Friend

Directed by Ken Russell. Based on the play by Sandy Wilson. With Twiggy, Christopher Gable, and Tommy Tune. Running time 145 minutes. At the Coolidge Corner beginning September 4.

It all started in 1954 when Sandy Wilson wrote *The Boy Friend*. The 1920s jazz age musical pastich, complete with flappers and Charleston dancing, was a hit in both the West End and Broadway. In 1971, extravaganza director Ken Russell (*Women in Love*, *The Music Lovers*, *Crimes of Passion*) made the small musical into a mammoth two hour and 25 minute tap dancing and singing fest.

Rather than just transfer the Wilson show to celluloid, Russell's film focuses on the ambitions of a small, provincial, touring company (somewhere in the English netherlands) performing *The Boy Friend*. In Russell's deconstructionist vision, we see not only their tacky on-stage show but also how the show exists in their extreme imaginations: Busby Berkeley-esque, panorama of tap dancing show girls and kaleidoscope special effects.

When *The Boy Friend* was released in 1971 in the US 35 minutes were trimmed off of the commercial release. On September 4, the Coolidge Corner will begin showing *The (uncut) Boyfriend*. There is some speculation about exactly what has been missing, but word has it the restored scenes include a tasteful orgy and lesbian chorus girls. Whatever is included you can be sure to see the wonderful performances of Twiggy, Tommy Tune and Christopher Gable. (Russell is true to life in so far as all of the men in the film seem to be playing musical comedy queens.) Also, be sure not to miss an uncredited Glenda Jackson in a cameo playing the Bebe Daniels role as the star with a broken ankle.

—Michael Bronski

Law of Desire.

Directed by Pedro Almodóvar. Spanish with English subtitles. With Eusebio Poncela, Carmen Maura and Antonio Banderas. Running time 100 minutes. Begins August 28 at the Nickolodeon.

Murder, a sex-change operation, amnesia, a car crash. All these plot cliches come back to life and find a home in Pedro Almodóvar's film, *Law of Desire*. This sexy and funny movie is a reminder that Francisco Franco is still dead and that Spain has come back to life, celebrating its rediscovered passion.

Pedro Almodóvar, Spain's most acclaimed young filmmaker, puts on a formidable show with a very talented cast. Eusebio Poncela plays the philosophical playboy Pablo. He is the object of desire for Juan, his unsure younger lover, and for Antonio, a handsome but crazy guy who makes the movie's title clear because he truly lives by the "law of desire." This menage a trois is complicated by Pablo's transsexual sister, Tina (played by Carmen Maura) and Ada, Tina's "niece," er, adopted daughter—well, see the movie. All the characters are larger than life and willing to work for what they want—which in this case is always a lover.

The cinematography captures the gaudy atmosphere of '50s low-budget thrillers and the melodramatic music made me laugh at all the most serious moments.

Almodóvar also makes fun of Spanish Catholicism—its superstition and sublimated eroticism—and exploits the Spanish flair for camp.

I haven't seen such an enjoyable movie since *Parting Glances* or *My Beautiful Landrette*. Don't let the language daunt you; the subtitles are good. See this picture.

—Gerardo Maria Cabrera

Calendar compiled by Barnaby Fisher

GayCommunity News

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